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PIETY AND POLITICS: THE CASE OF THE SATMAR REBBE

Allan L. Nadler

THE HOLOCAUST IN LITERATURE, THEOLOGY AND ACADEMIA

David R. Mesher

Benny Kraut

Alan L. Berger

STEFAN ZWEIG—A LETTER AND AN INTERVIEW

Alfred Wolf

RABBI NACHMAN OF BRATSLAV— A TELLER OF TALES

Howard Schwartz

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JUDAISM

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STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

In increasing measure, modern men are turning again to the quest for a worldview on the issues that are timeless—the meaning of life, the challenge of death, the purpose of suffering, the significance of the individual, his relation to society, and the goal of history. In order to advance this enterprise of spiritual discovery of our time this Journal has been projected. It will be primarily concerned with the philosophy, ethics, and religion of Judaism as a factor in the contemporary world . . .

We are committed to the proposition that Judaism has positive value today for Jews and for the world . . . At the same time, we disassociate ourselves from the dangerous tendency toward the hardening of party lines on the contemporary Jewish scene . . . The members of the Board of Editors belong to every school of Jewish life or to none. The trends popularly referred to as Orthodox, Conservatism, Reform, Reconstructionism, as well as others that as yet have no specific names, have their advocates among us, though no institution or movement is officially represented . . . Undoubtedly, our differences will find expression in these pages, but we shall be at one in opposing the dogmatism which takes for granted that one's own particular standpoint has a monopoly on truth and the authoritarianism which would suppress any contrary point of view.

Judaism will be dedicated to the quest for truth in the spirit of freedom. Our columns will be open to anyone who has something significant to say and the ability to say it well. New and unconventional interpretations, whatever their standpoint, will be welcomed from every source, for we share the conviction of the Talmud that "Both these and the others are the words of the living God." *From the introductory article by Robert Gordis, "Toward a Renaissance of Judaism" in Vol. I, No. 1.*

The First Reader

The Satmar Rebbe: An Analytical View

Perhaps the most controversial group in contemporary Jewish life are the Satmar Hasidim. Their uncompromising hostility to the State of Israel and the violence with which they attack their opponents are an index of their passionate commitment to their own outlook. At the same time, they have aroused widespread anger in most segments of the Jewish community. There has, however, been little attempt to understand their philosophy of Judaism, of which the Satmar rebbe is the spokesman.

In his paper, "Piety and Politics: The Case of the Satmar Rebbe," *Allan L. Nadler* replaces the widespread approach of denunciation of the Satmarer by a careful and objective analysis of the movement, from its origins in Hungarian orthodoxy a half-century and more ago to the present.

The paper raises important questions with regard to the attitude of the Jewish community toward this remarkable group.

Looking for the Messiah

Recently, increasing attention has been paid to the fiction of American-Jewish writers, whose work now constitutes a very respectable body of literature. The novels and short stories written during the past half century have been studied and analyzed from very many points of view, literary, historical and sociological.

One aspect that has not hitherto been noted is the treatment of the theme of the Messiah. *Elliot B. Gertel* devotes his paper, "Visions of the American Jewish Messiah," to the use of this theme by three writers as diverse as Ludwig Lewisohn, Jerome Weidman and Arthur A. Cohen. His treatment reveals a significant and largely unsuspected facet in their work and thought.

The Holocaust in the Universities and in the Books

In the heyday of Nazism, Albert Einstein described his deep disillusion and heartsickness at the failure of the cultural forces in Germany to rise up against the Beast. The universities, the press, the literary world, the political parties, even the labor unions — all remained silent as the program for Jewish genocide proceeded without interruption. Einstein concluded by declaring that the only voices raised against Nazism were a few intrepid representatives of religion, both Catholic and Protestant, and they were easily counted.

The Holocaust is now history — or should be. Nevertheless, three decades and more after the destruction of the Nazi Juggernaut, the universities in the free world are still ignoring or soft-peddalling the subject in their research, teaching and publications. This is the charge documented by *Alan L. Berger* in his paper, "Academia and the Holocaust".

Similarly, in the first decades following the Holocaust, there was a deafening silence both among Jews as well as among Christians, with regard to the unbelievable horrors perpetrated by Nazism. Then, like a channel long dammed up came a stream and then a tide of writings representing every conceivable genre and approach and every possible level of quality and significance.

Two review-essays deal with them. The first, by *David R. Mesher*, discusses and evaluates four recent volumes of criticism by Alvin H. Rosenfeld, Edward Alexander, Sidra DeKoven Ezrahi and Lawrence L. Langer. From varying perspectives, these writers analyze the literary output on the Holocaust that constitute monuments erected on six million graves.

The Holocaust has also been of consuming interest to philosophers, theologians, historians, sociologists. In the second review-essay, "Faith and the Holocaust," *Benny Kraut* presents his reactions to two works, one theological, by Eliezer Berkovits, and the other sociological, by Reeve Brenner.

Asking the Right Questions About Evil

A library of substantial dimensions could be gathered on the subject of God and evil. The perfection of God, which traditional religion has made a cornerstone of its world view, is obviously challenged by human consciousness and conscience when it observes the ubiquity and, frequently, the triumph of evil in a world that He created. In his paper, "The Perfection of God and the Presence of Evil," *Kenneth R. Seeskin* presents his approach to this perennial issue. It is hardly to be expected that the definitive solution has now been discovered. However, as the discussion of this subject continues — and it will — Seeskin's effort to resolve the contradiction will be read with interest, even if his conclusions do not command total assent.

Teaching By Telling

In the present and growing interest in Hasidism, no figure has attracted more attention than the enigmatic personality of Rabbi Nachman of Bratslav. His mysterious and mystical tales have been published in no less than three independent English versions during the past few years.

Howard Schwartz approaches this "tormented master" of Hasidism from the literary point of view, rather than in religious terms. He analyzes Rabbi Nachman's personality in categories derived from C.G. Jung and sees in him a precursor of modern Hebrew literature. To illustrate Schwartz' points — and for our readers' pleasure — we are also printing two of Rabbi Nachman's stories.

Sometimes Even Philosophers Don't Understand

It is a sad but undeniable fact that creative spirits, when they are contemporaries, rarely appreciate one another. Each tends to become the center of his own solar system. *Maurice Friedman*, in his paper "Walter Kaufmann's Mis-meeting with Buber" maintains that the German-American philosopher did not do justice to the German-Israeli philosopher. He offers his explanation for their non-meeting of minds.

Some Personal Glimpses of Stefan Zweig

During the pre-Hitler era, Stefan Zweig was regarded as one of the ornaments of German literature. In the decades following his suicide, however, his reputation suffered a drastic decline and he was all but forgotten. Now, the centenary of his birth and the fortieth anniversary of his death, both of which come this year, have served to renew interest in his work.

A uniquely interesting contribution to the subject is provided by *Alfred Wolf* in his paper, "Stefan Zweig and Judaism — A Letter and an Interview." Aside from the human interest of the encounter between the famous writer and a young student, these reminiscences shed light on Zweig's universalistic ideals and his very moderate interest in Judaism.

Vienna Was Not All "Gemütlichkeit"

Unpredictable and unimaginable as the Nazi Holocaust was, it did not spring full-grown overnight from the soil of Europe. Anti-Semitism had a long and disgraceful history in Germany and Austria long before the house painter with the little mustache dragged the human race back to the level of the beast. Pre-war Vienna was more than Blue Danube waltzes and Sacher-torte pastry.

In a review-essay entitled, "An Irrational Society Revisited: The Viennese Rejection of Liberalism and the Jews," *Herbert A. Yoskowitz* reviews *Carl Schorske's Fin-De-Siècle Vienna*. It describes the life of Vienna at the turn of the century as, at once, a hotbed of anti-Semitism and reaction and a world-center of music and culture.

R.G.

Piety and Politics: The Case of the Satmar Rebbe

ALLAN L. NADLER

IT WAS CERTAINLY ONE OF THE MOST BIZARRE meetings ever held in Gracie Mansion, when the Mayor of New York stepped in to make peace between warring Hasidic factions. Mayor Edward Koch warned the Hasidic leaders of Satmar to control their street toughs who were terrorizing another Hasidic sect and threatening the life of its Rebbe. The city's Jews were deeply embarrassed by the ugly feuding, infuriated again by the troublesome Satmarers. Yet, very few really understood their shocking behaviour. Almost none could imagine that their criminal conduct was the logical outcome of a serious understanding of Talmudic Judaism — a reading of classic Jewish texts which, as recently as fifty years ago, was shared by the world's leading Talmudic authorities, as well as by the masses of Orthodox Jewry.

The Belzer Hasidim now prefer to park their Hebrew-marked school buses overnight in black Bedford-Styvesant rather than risk their being vandalized in Hasidic Williamsburg. The reason lies in a philosophy of religion, in the writings of their rival, the late Satmar Rebbe, R. Joel Teitlebaum.¹ His elaborate theology and his rather sophisticated understanding of Jewish history lie at the root of the attitudes and behaviour of tens of thousands of his followers. These Williamsburg Jews are not ordinary thugs. They are, as they would say, emissaries of God, and it is their sacred duty to fight the Satanic force which, according to their Rebbe, threatens completely to envelop and destroy world Jewry. That Satanic force is Zionism.

Teitlebaum dedicated his long life — and hence, the lives of his

1. Teitlebaum's major works, all written in Hebrew, are:

- *Va'Yoel Moshe*, 3 Vols., [Studies in Jewish quietism, the role of the Land of Israel in Judaism, and the religious status of the Hebrew language.] (Brooklyn, 1959, 1960, 1961.)
- *Al Ha'Geulah V'al Hatemurah*. [A Theological interpretation of the six day war] (Brooklyn, 1967).
- *Divrei Yoel-Mikhtavim* [Collected letters] (Brooklyn, 1980), 2 Vols.
- *Divrei Yoel*, 9 Vols. [Biblical commentary] (Brooklyn, 1971).
- *Hiddushei Sugyoth* [Talmudic novellae] (Brooklyn, 1964-65), 2 Vols.
- *Perush at HaHaggadah* [Haggadah commentary] (Brooklyn, 1969).
- *Tehillot Yoel* [Commentary on Psalms] (Brooklyn, 1972).
- *Kuntres Hiddushei Torah* [Essays, sermons, Talmudic interpretations] (Brooklyn, 1962-1969), 5 Vols.

The Satmars' dispute with Belz is fully explained in a voluminous work based on the Rebbe's writings: see, Moshe Beck, *Mikhtav Hithorerut* (626 pages!).

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Hasidim — to the battle with Zionism. With its every success, the holy war became more desperate, the tactics more extreme. The “perverse” popularity of the secular State of Israel, among Orthodox Jews especially, revealed the awesome extent of Satan’s deception of the Jews, and only extreme methods of protest and combat might succeed in freeing the Jews from the devil’s ensnarement. The methods of the Satmarers in combating Zionism intensified, therefore, in direct proportion to the growing credibility of the Zionist State in the Orthodox Jewish world. The Satmarers would argue that, far from being a manifestation of Jewish self-hate, the intimidation of — and violence against — all Zionist sympathizers is paradoxically based on an intense love for the People of Israel and the Land of Israel, both of whose intrinsic holiness is being polluted by the Zionist “heresy.” The urgency of their sacred goal of completely eradicating this “abomination” justifies virtually any means which might prove effective.

Unlike most New York City street violence, then, the case of Satmar vs. Belz (or Satmar vs. Lubavitch, or Satmar vs. Agudah, or Satmar vs. Mizrachi, etc.) is not the result of that city’s social ills. It is, rather, an outcome of the Talmudic teachings of a most remarkable Rabbi and scholar. Doctrine, not poverty, and certainly not a tendency to hatred and violence inherent in Hungarian Hasidim, inspires Satmar youths as they vandalize “Zionist” synagogues and burn Belzer school buses. In examining the anti-Zionist doctrine of the Satmar Rebbe one discovers that there is method, and even a little wisdom, to the Satmarer’s madness.

The Zionist bid for acceptance by the Orthodox Jewish masses in the early decades of this century was a slow, uphill struggle which did not succeed until after European Jewry was no more and the State of Israel had become a reality. Most of the leading Rabbis of Eastern Europe viewed political Zionism with deep suspicion, if not outright contempt, for this movement was accurately perceived as yet another outcome of the dangerous movement of Jewish enlightenment, or *Haskalah*, whose goal was the radical alteration of traditional Jewish society in Europe.² Those Rabbis who ended up joining Zionist ranks were almost always relative unknowns in the Rabbinic world and they never represented more than a small minority. The *Gedolei Yisrael*, the world’s acknowledged leading Talmudists — were almost without exception bitterly opposed to the Zionist plan to “normalize” the Chosen People,³ for the Zionist dream represented a thorough rejection of traditional Jewish values, and its realization would mean the total destruction of traditional Jewish life in

2. On the Orthodox response to Zionism, see Ben Halpern, *The Idea of the Jewish State* (Cambridge, Ma., 1969), Chapter 3.

3. There exist several important collections of responsa on the question of Zionism from leading Orthodox Rabbis of Eastern Europe, including:

A.B. Steinberg, ed., *Da'at HaRabanim* (Warsaw, 1902).

S.Z. Landau, Y. Rabinowitz, ed. *Or LaYesharim* (Warsaw, 1900).

Hayyim Bloch, ed., *Dovev Siftei Yesheirim* (N.Y., 1959), 3 Vols.

Europe. Curiously enough, the Rabbis who fought Zionism sometimes understood it better than did those who, inspired by the traditional Jewish yearning for Zion and the hope for the Messianic restoration of Israel, joined its ranks. Modern political Zionism was not really a traditional messianic movement at all. It was, rather, a typical European nationalist movement which made romantic use of classical Jewish messianic texts to evoke the entirely secular utopia that it desired to create. Zionists like Brenner, Berditchevsky and Ben Gurion were not at all interested in hastening the millennium. Quite the contrary. They had despaired of that traditional Jewish dream and had replaced it with a Jewish version of nineteenth century political utopianism. The Torah Sages who formed the Agudath Israel movement at Katowitz in 1912, in order to fight Zionism, understood this very well. The religious Zionists of Mizrachi, naively determined to “purify” secular Zionism, ignored its most fundamental features and tried to turn it into the Messianic movement that it was not.

The destruction of Jewish life in Europe during the second world war, and the crystalization of the Zionist dream in the modern state of Israel, seemed to render earlier Rabbinic opposition to Zionist goals purely theoretical and largely irrelevant. Agudath Israel, while never adopting Zionist ideology, quickly came to terms with the new realities created by the existence of a Jewish State and fully participated in Israeli political life. With each new military threat to the State from its Arab foes, the traditional Rabbinic concern for the welfare of all Jews served to intensify the Rabbis’ political support for Israel. Orthodoxy’s ideological battle with Zionism was over — almost. One lonely but determined Sage of pre-war Europe adamantly refused to desist, refused to grant any legitimacy to the successes of the “heresy.” That was Rabbi Joel Teitlebaum, who continued the old Rabbinic war with Jewish Nationalism as if nothing had changed.

There was nothing remarkable about R. Joel’s fight with the Zionists in his pre-war Roumanian community of Szatu-Mare (St. Mary!). He was one out of hundreds — perhaps thousands — of Rabbis engaged in a similar struggle. Yet, by 1947, when he arrived in America (via Palestine), he found that he was the last living proponent of this once mainstream Rabbinic stance. In a letter written in May, 1948, on the eve of the establishment of the State of Israel, Teitlebaum lamented the fact that all of the American Rabbis had apparently “sold themselves” to the Zionist perfidy, and he stood alone. “I have become the object of scorn and contempt,” he complains. Yet he vows that “no force in the world shall move me from my stand, to accept the Zionist heresy, from which the Merciful One must save us.”⁴

4. *Divrei-Yoel – Mikhtavim*, Vol. I, no. 69. In another letter from this early period in America, Teitlebaum muses: “The people of this land are distant and alienated from me; for they are all angered by my opposition to this idolatry (Zionism), and I stand alone” (*Ibid.*, Vol. I, no. 77. See also, *Ibid.*, Vol. II, no. 120.)

Teitlebaum proved to be a man of his word. Over the next three decades, until his death in 1979 at the age of 93, the Satmar Rebbe defiantly waged his holy war with the Zionist “idolatry.” He alone spoke for that Rabbinic tradition which was once respectable, but which he now made bizarre and often obscene. His contempt for Zionism — and, hence, the State of Israel — knew no bounds. It was, quite simply, the most vile heresy in Jewish history, more dangerous than the Golden Calf and more evil than the idolatries of Moloch and Ba’al. The total destruction of the State of Israel would be a necessary first step towards the salvation of the Jews.

The Satmar Rebbe’s opposition to Zionism, his characterization of all Zionists as heretics, his refusal to allow any Zionist sympathizers in his community, his denial of any religious significance to the State of Israel are, then, well rooted in history. They reflect the standard pre-war Orthodox stance on modern Jewish nationalism. But Teitlebaum took this stance much further. Zionism was, for him, the source of all that is wrong with the world, and Israel was the devil incarnate. Zionists were more than mere heretics; they were worse than idolators. Teitlebaum ruled that given the “awful” choice, a Jew ought to give his children up to Christian missionaries rather than entrust them to the Zionist authorities. He placed the entire blame for the Holocaust squarely upon the shoulders of the Zionist movement. And he insisted that the Messiah will not arrive so long as the State of Israel exists.

The rabidity of Teitelbaum’s stance is, no doubt, a psychological outcome of his political isolation. But the extremity of his position is more than merely tactical. For, theoretically as well, the Satmar Rebbe went far beyond the traditional Rabbinic suspicion of Zionism’s very novelty and of the changes that it wished to introduce in Jewish life. His ideological opposition to Zionism was more advanced, and his critique far more sophisticated than those of his predecessors. In fact, there are four distinct levels to the Satmar Rebbe’s elaborate dispute with Zionism: (a) Zionism’s secularity and Israel’s democracy; (b) Zionism’s false messianism; (c) Zionism’s defiance of traditional Jewish quietism; (d) Zionism’s relationship with anti-Semitism.

(a) Political Zionism was fundamentally a secular, not a religious, movement. It was, at best, indifferent to the Rabbinic tradition and often in violation of it. Despite the lofty attempts of religious Zionists to “redeem” the movement, its basically secular character remained unaltered, its leaders irreligious, and its goals purely political. And the state which the movement finally succeeded in creating was to be a modern democracy ruled by politicians and statesmen, not a theocracy ruled by Rabbis and Prophets. It was to be modelled after the secular democracies of the Western world, not in accordance with the guidelines set forth by

Maimonides in the Book of Kings of his *Mishneh Torah*. Moreover, for many leading Zionists, the State was to herald in a new era of Jewish history in which national self-determination would replace subservience to halakhah, and the Knesset and Supreme Court would replace the medieval Rabbinic oligarchy and its courts as the decisors of law for the people of Israel.

Nevertheless, there is a great deal of religion in the modern State of Israel. The Jewish Sabbath and festivals are official national holidays. The country has an elected Chief Rabbinate with significant clout, and the religious parties lobby continuously, and often successfully, for the increased legislation of halakhah in the Knesset. Still, as Orthodoxy's liberal opponents in Israel correctly point out, Israel, in theory at least, is supposed to be a modern secular state in which there is unrestricted freedom of conscience and where modern law, not ancient halakhah, is legislated. Teitlebaum would agree.

For, unlike those responsible for the establishment of the Ministry of Religions and a political Chief Rabbinate in Israel, the Satmar Rebbe did not make himself blind to Israel's unalterable modernity. Even if, for the purpose of forming convenient political coalitions, the Rabbis are granted exclusive jurisdiction over family law, the government remains a secular one. The Satmar Rebbe refused to be impressed by the limited concessions of the Zionist "heretics" to their state's Orthodox Jews. Recalling the Psalmist's declaration that the "Torah of God is complete," the Rebbe would not take any joy in the condescending and largely token compromises which the National Religious Party managed to squeeze from the secular majority in the Knesset. The State remained an affront to halakhic Judaism.

Culling from a wealth of Talmudic and Rabbinic sources, Teitlebaum argued that sinners and heretics could not possibly be the source of any blessing. Quite the contrary, the fruits of the labors must be, by definition, a curse. Hence, their legislation of halakhah is of no significance. He did not share the illusions of Israel's religious parties that there was a hope of realizing the Mizrachi motto, "The Land of Israel for the people of Israel according to the Torah of Israel," and turning the Zionist "abomination" into a theocracy. The only intellectually honest and practical Torah response to a thoroughly secular movement was total and uncompromising rejection.

Jewish Law is decided by Rabbis, not politicians. These Rabbis' authority derives from their Talmudic learning, not their election by popular vote. And the Law which they adjudicate is Divine, hence immutable, and not subject to revision and abrogation. It was, Teitlebaum argued, absolutely impossible to make a modern democracy conform to the most basic requirements of Jewish Law. In defiance of the revolutionary concept of normalization so central to Jewish Nationalism, he insisted that Jews are not *Goyim*, and that what is admittedly good for the

“Nations of the Earth” is not necessarily appropriate for God’s chosen ones.

The principle of democracy is good for the Nations of the Earth who did not accept the Torah. But for the Jews who accepted the Torah along with thousands of vows to be responsible for the behaviour of their fellow-Jews and to compel them to observe Jewish Law (even against their will), the idea of democracy when applied to religion constitutes a denial of the Holy Torah and total heresy from which the Merciful One must save us!⁵

Any government which maintains a democratic parliament in which the most basic religious issues can be put to a majority vote is irredeemably heterodox. Furthermore, for Jews to maintain courts of law in which anything other than pure halakhah is adjudicated is no less than obscene for,

... while the Nations of the Earth who do this are fulfilling a Mitzvah since the sons of Noah were commanded to establish judiciaries and they never accepted the Torah ... as for the people of Israel which accepted the Torah and was thereby chosen from among the nations, its rejection of the Torah in order to legislate heathen law in its stead represents without a doubt a total repudiation of Judaism.⁶

At issue here are the political consequences of Jewish chosenness, of the special status of the Jews in the world of nations. In diametrical opposition to the Zionist dream of establishing for the Jews a state like that of all other nations, thereby normalizing the “people that dwelleth alone,” the Rebbe recalls Israel’s election from among the nations and suggests that this concept precludes the realization of that dream. Moreover, this uncompromising rejection of the religious validity of a modern democratic government for Jews would apply even if every member of the Knesset were devoutly Orthodox, and even if the Supreme Court of Israel were adjudicating pure halakhah. For not only are its leading members unfit, by virtue of their impiety, to be leaders of the Chosen People; the very nature of the state’s legislative and judicial institutions does not meet the standards of the Torah.

In considering this critique, one is reminded of the not too different assault upon the Israeli religious establishment by Yeshayahu Leibowitz of Tel Aviv University, a leading Israeli scientist and Orthodox thinker. Leibowitz has for years argued against the attempt to adjudicate halakhah in Israel via such institutions as the Knesset and Supreme Court, and to institute it through the political Chief Rabbinate. All this, he contends, is religiously offensive, politically insincere and practically unworkable. Like the Satmar Rebbe, Leibowitz has no use for token half-measures intended to appease a religious lobby, for their acceptance compromises the integrity of Judaism. He has argued cogently that the widespread corruption in Israel’s religious life, the duplicity and pettiness of the

5. *Va’Yoel Moshe*, Vol. I, no. 100.

6. *Ibid.*

religious parties, and the widespread contempt for the Chief Rabbinate are all the sad outcome of the unholy endeavour to integrate religion into a basically secular state. As both an Orthodox Jew as well as a Zionist, Leibowitz correctly sees the complete separation of synagogue and state in Israel and the elimination of the Ministry of Religions as the only way to restore the dignity of Judaism in a sovereign Jewish state, and to eliminate the hostility of secular Israelis to their religious neighbors.⁷

Both Teitlebaum and Leibowitz understand the incompatibility of modern democratic institutions and Jewish Law. Both agree that halakhah can not rule the modern state of Israel, and that the piecemeal attempt to institute halakhic rulings is not only meaningless, it corrupts halakhah and compromises the totality of Judaism. Leibowitz, as a Zionist vitally concerned with the good and welfare of Israel, calls for the separation of religion and government, and Teitlebaum, the anti-Zionist, for reasons of his own, fully agrees. For if the State of Israel were openly and unequivocally secular, it is likely that the Satmarers would not be much bothered by it; it would then be sufficiently obvious to all Orthodox Jews that such a state could not possibly be of any religious importance.

Teitlebaum is faithful to the isolationist outlook of 19th century Hungarian Orthodoxy. That outlook, inspired by Rabbi Moses Sofer of Pressburg, denied membership in *klal yisrael* to the non-Orthodox, and called for the complete separation of traditional Jewry from modern life and modern Jews.⁸ Heir to that tradition, Teitlebaum is not terribly exercised by secular Zionists, for they are entirely beyond the framework of his Jewish people. Not so religious Zionists; the involvement of Orthodox Jews in the Zionist heresy is a source of great philosophical distress. The separation of synagogue and state in Israel would confirm Teitlebaum's characterization of Zionism as purely secular and obviate the need for much of his polemic.

(b) Far more dangerous than Zionism's secularism, then, is Zionism's religion. This is particularly true of the grandiose apocalyptic claims of Religious Zionists who, in their prayer for the welfare of the State of Israel, call it "the first flower of our redemption." Aside from his contempt for its compromising with secular Jews, the Satmar Rebbe viewed religious Zionism as a form of false messianism. He thus classified it as the most recent — and most virulent — pretender in the long history of

7. See the collection of Leibowitz' articles, *Yahadut, Am Yehudi, U'Medinat Yisrael* (Jerusalem, 1975).

8. On Sofer and the Orthodoxy which he inspired, see his Ethical Will and the expansive commentary on it by R. Akiva Yosef Schlesinger, *Lev Ha'Ivri* (Jerusalem, 1923-24). See, also, the works of his disciples:

R. Hillel Lichtenstein, *Maskil 'El Dal* (Kolomea 1887-1889);

———, *Tokhakha Megullah* (Kolomea, 1872-1873);

Hayyim Sofer, *Sha'arei Hayyim* (Munkacz, 1869).

See also, Jacob Katz, "Kavim Lebiographia Shel HaHatam Sofer," in *Mehkarim . . . Mugashim LeGershon Scholem* (Jerusalem, 1968) Heb. part., pp. 115-148.

Jewish false messiahs. Among the many messianic mis-adventures of the Jews, Teitlebaum most often compared Jewish Nationalism with the Sabbatean movement. That last great apocalyptic movement, inspired by the messianic claims of Shabbetai Zevi, wrought much havoc in Eastern Europe and Oriental Jewries in the latter part of the seventeenth century. The history of Sabbateanism proves, oddly enough, to be a source of comfort to the Satmar Rebbe. For Shabbetai Zevi, too, had managed to deceive the masses of Orthodox Jewry of his day, including its leading Rabbis. The current popularity of Zionism thus says nothing about its legitimacy.

Sabbateanism, like other messianisms, inspired its opponents — Rabbis possessed by their fear of its consequences. Among the most vocal anti-Sabbatean polemicists were such colorful Rabbinic scholars as Jacob Sasportas, Zevi Ashkenazi, Jacob Emden, and Moses Hagiz.⁹ In fact, one may discern in Jewish history a certain type of religious leader who emerges in such inflamed religious contexts, and who may be described as the “heresy-hunter.” Deeply inspired by the heresy-hunters of an earlier age, Teitlebaum vowed to carry on their sacred mission of ridding the Jewish people of its infidels. Teitlebaum thus saw himself as the last in a proud line of Rabbis whose vigilance had assured the salvation of the Jews. He was, in fact, temperamentally well-suited for that self-styled role. His volatile personality evokes the memory of the controversial Jacob Emden whose stormy career as a lonely heresy-hunter left him and a small group of followers isolated from the Jewish community of Altona where he lived.¹⁰ Not surprisingly, the similarly isolated Satmar community of Williamsburg has sponsored the reprinting of many of Emden’s works, and the Satmar Rebbe’s personal secretary, Rabbi Joseph Ashkenazy, claims to be a direct descendant of Rabbi Zevi Ashkenazi, Emden’s father.

- Teitlebaum himself was especially fond of quoting one of Emden’s prophecies in which he predicts that a new Messianic cult akin to Sabbateanism will arise in future generations and once again deceive the masses of world Jewry. Of course, Teitlebaum identifies that anonymous cult with Modern Jewish Nationalism.

The Satmar Rebbe’s opposition to the mixture of Zionism and Jewish Messianism brings to mind the objections of others to religious nationalism. Many secular Zionists with no real agreement with Teitlebaum would share his fears of the dangers of messianic politics. Gershom Scholem has, for years, warned of the dangers of applying apocalyptic visions to political realities.¹¹ He has soberly insisted on viewing Zionism as a national —

9. Teitlebaum read and extensively quoted all of these heresy-hunters, especially Jacob Sasportas, whose work, *Zizit Novel Zevi* greatly inspired the Rebbe’s own polemical writing and determination. See, inter alia, *Va’Yoel Moshe*, Vol. I, no. 175.

10. Regarding Emden, see Mortimer Cohen, *Jacob Emden – Man of Controversy* (Phil., 1937).

11. Scholem has written the definitive study of Sabbateanism, *Shabtai Zevi*, (Tel Aviv, 1967). A good description of the relationship between Scholem’s politics and understanding of

not a religious — movement, and the State of Israel as that movement's ultimate political success — not the realization of divine promises made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

The dangers of Messianic Zionism have become especially manifest in Israel in recent years. The total indifference to political realities and pragmatic security considerations of such religious fringe groups as Gush Emunim, and the clear threat that their unholy politics poses to stability in the Middle East, reveals the potential perniciousness of Judaism when abused for political purposes. Of course, it would be unfair to use Teitelbaum's theology as an argument against the excesses of religious Zionism. For, ultimately, the Satmar Rebbe calls for the destruction of the State of Israel, while the disciples of Rabbi Kook, although misguided, give their lives in its defense. Yet, Rabbi Joel's learned critique of religious Zionism aptly reveals its inner contradictions, and underscores the folly of using the Bible as a political manifesto. In his purist representation of traditional Judaism, the Satmar Rebbe reminds us that the synthesis of religion and politics is not only religiously dishonest and politically dangerous, but also foreign to the very spirit of the Rabbinic political tradition.

(c) Gerson Cohen has recently defined the "reality of Jewish Messianism" most succinctly in concluding that "prayer was one thing — action another."¹² While never despairing of the final redemption, the Jew would do nothing practical actively to hasten its arrival. A Talmudic legend recalls that after the exile from Jerusalem, God foreswore the "daughters of Israel" regarding three sacred oaths:

... what are these three oaths? First, that they (i.e. the Jews) not emigrate en masse to the Land of Israel; second, that (the people of Israel) not rebel against the Nations; and third, that the Nations of the Earth not unduly oppress the Jews.

Later in the same passage, the Talmud mentions three additional oaths to which the Jews swore:

... that they not reveal the time of the apocalypse; that they not forcibly hasten the apocalypse; and that they not reveal its assigned time to the Nations of the earth.¹³

Not only actual messianic activity, but even predicting the date of the Savior's arrival was regarded as a sign of infidelity and lack of trust in God's plan for the world. As a consequence of the Jews' political power-

Jewish mysticism can be found in David Biale, *Gershom Scholem: Kabbalah and Counter History* (Cambridge, Ma., 1979), Chapter 8.

12. From a lecture entitled, *The Messianic Idea in Jewish History: Myth and Reality*, delivered on April 13th, 1981 at the Columbia University Conference, "Perspectives on Jewish Mysticism."

13. Babylonian Talmud (B.T.) *Ketubot*, 111a.

lessness and the influence of such practical Talmudic attitudes, post-Exilic Jewry remained politically quietistic.

To be sure, there were many millenarians in Jewish history, but they were never accepted by the Rabbinic elite, for they were guilty of trying to take history, which is God's, into their own hands. The Rabbis maintained that "all is in the hands of heaven except the fear of heaven."¹⁴ Divine Providence, then, was to be the sole author of man's fate.

The Zionists' great revolution, as historians have observed, was their attempt to usurp the role traditionally ascribed to God, and to take control of Jewish national destiny. Their success resulted in a fundamental change in the way that Jews viewed both themselves and their political position. According to Teitlebaum, in its attempt to solve the "Jewish Problem" and realize the political "redemption" of the Jews, Zionism was guilty of transgressing the three Talmudic oaths and violating God's trust in the people of Israel.

The call for the mass emigration of European Jews to Israel lay at the very center of the Zionist political initiative, for, without the radical demographic changes that such emigration would bring, the Jews could not even begin to rebuild their ancient land. Still today, many Zionist ideologues insist that mass *aliyah* is the key to Israel's future and — following ben Gurion — that there can be no such creature as a Zionist whose home is outside of Israel. This central element in the Zionist platform, Teitlebaum points out, is in flagrant violation of the first oath which suggests that God will remove the Jews from exile only when He is ready.

Elaborating on the implications of the Jews' commitment not to emigrate to Israel before the assigned time, the Satmar Rebbe develops an entire theory of the religious importance of Exile. The scattering of the Jews to the corners of the earth is imbued with deep spiritual, indeed cosmic, significance. Following in the traditions of 16th century Lurianic Kabbalah, Teitlebaum suggests that the Jews have been dispersed in order to effect the restoration of the universe to its primordial state of perfection:

By virtue of the exile of Israel among the nations, the glory of God will fill the earth and faith in Him and His Torah will become manifest throughout the world.¹⁵

Exile is not only tolerable; it is a mission. While redemption is nowhere denied or despaired of, it is no longer so urgent, for Exile has become a process of the redemption. Here the Satmar Rebbe can be seen as perpetuating what Gershom Scholem has called "the neutralization of the Messianic idea" in Hasidism.¹⁶ Teitlebaum summarizes his perspective on Exile and Redemption simply enough:

14. B.T., *Berakhot*, 33b.

15. *Va'Yoel Moshe*, Vol. II, no. 110.

16. See Scholem's essay, "The Neutralization of the Messianic Element in Hassidism", in his collection of essays, *The Messianic Idea in Judaism* (N.Y., 1974).

Exile brings an even greater redemption for the future. Moreover, the scattering of Israel whereby God spread them throughout the world was a good thing — good for God and good for the Jews.¹⁷

The Holocaust, needless to say, proved that exile is not quite “good for the Jews.” Yet it is worth noting that the Rebbe’s optimistic view is based on a cogent reading of Talmudic and Kabbalistic sources, and is no less faithful to these classical texts of Judaism than is Religious Zionism’s selective use of the Torah to support its geographical claims.

Throughout his writings, the Satmar Rebbe reminds his followers that Zionism constitutes the most radical departure from the traditional Jewish political posture and a violation of the second oath. His term for that time-honored demeanor is *Derekh Yisrael Saba*, or the Way of Ancient Israel, and he tirelessly warns his Hasidim never to deviate in the least from the passive conduct that it requires of the Jew. This has always involved great respect for, and unswerving allegiance to, whichever political power the Jew happened to find himself under. The Sages of the Talmud had ruled that “the Law of the land is Law”¹⁸ and instructed the Jews to “pray for the welfare of the state.”¹⁹ All through the medieval period the Jews depended for their temporal well-being and political survival upon their lobbyists at the royal court — the *Shtadlanim*. These court-Jews employed a particular form of diplomacy (termed *Shtadlanut*), which usually involved subtle and cunning appeasement, often pleading and bribery, and completely excluded the politics of confrontation.

So far as Teitlebaum was concerned, the entire Zionist platform, especially the defense policy of the Jewish State, constitutes a radical departure from the philosophy and methods of *Shtadlanut*. A close observer of political developments in the Middle East, Teitlebaum was a constant critic of Israeli foreign policy and military activity. He held that Israeli “arrogance” and “aggression” were responsible for the outbreak of the Six-day and Yom Kippur wars, and suggested that both conflicts could have been avoided were it not for “Zionist provocation.” The Satmar Rebbe has a simple plan for a permanent mid-East peace:

If the Zionists were only to give up, there would be no more sorrows in Israel.²⁰

This easy solution will do more than just resolve the political conflict; it will also incur the blessings of God:

For now too, if the (Zionists) would only give up their state and government, they would undoubtedly remove thereby the wrath of God and all of these hardships would vanish.²¹

As for the clear danger to Israeli lives involved, if the Israelis simply “give

17. *VaYoel Moshe*, Vol. II, no. 111.

18. B.T., *Nedarim*, 28a.

19. B.T., *Abodah Zarah*, 4a.

20. *‘Al Ha’Geullah Ve’al HaTemurah*, Introduction, p. 10.

21. *Ibid.*, no. 44.

up,” the Rebbe — paraphrasing the Psalmist — instructs Israel to trust, not in the Lord but in the United Nations:

Furthermore, it is only natural to expect that if they were to simply disband the Zionist State and its government, that the United Nations would make special provisions in order to prevent any war or bloodshed.²²

In polemical writings such as these — written after the Six-day war! — Teitlebaum often sounds more like an Arab propagandist than a Hasidic Rebbe. In the later years of his literary career, shoddy political analysis increasingly displaced impressive theological discourse. Forced to explain widespread Western and universal Jewish support for the Zionist State, Teitlebaum resorted to language reminiscent of the Protocols of the Elders of Zion:

They (Zionists) are experts at manipulating public opinion throughout the world by exploiting the tremendous influence they have over virtually all of the world's newspapers and journals.²³

The Zionists also control the world's major banks!²⁴

The alleged power and aggressiveness of the Zionists is an affront to the passivity which the Torah-according-to-Satmar expects of the Jews. Throughout the Middle Ages, the chroniclers of Jewish tragedy lamented the helplessness of the Jews at the hands of the powers of Christianity and Islam. “We are emptied from one vessel into another”; “we are led like sheep to the slaughter”; “there is no one to come to our defense,” are all recurring themes in the medieval chronicles. It would appear that this self-perception, which Salo Baron has termed the “lachrymose view of Jewish history,” became so familiar and accepted, that suffering and passivity were eventually sanctified. What began as an inescapable, but lamented, fate was rationalized by the Rabbis and, ultimately, became a standard for Jewish behavior.

The Satmar Rebbe subscribed fully to the lachrymose view. The Holocaust fit nicely into this historical perspective and caused him no philosophical distress. There is, consequently, no discussion of the Holocaust in any of Teitlebaum's writings. Of course, he mourned the devastation caused by the Nazis, but he saved his bitterest lamentations for the Jews' recovery of political power and national independence.

Teitlebaum's theory of history and politics is applied not only to contemporary events, but, significantly, informs the way in which he reads all of Jewish history. He finds much importance in the fact that the vast majority of Jews in the Babylonian exile did not capitalize upon the opportunity afforded them by King Cyrus to return to Israel in the sixth century B.C.E.; he views the Maccabees (who have become the historical model for the Zionist pioneers and Israeli soldiers) with much ambiva-

22. Ibid.

23. Ibid., no. 46.

24. Ibid., no. 79.

lence and maintains that the miracle of oil in the Temple, and not Hasmonean military successes, constitutes the true miracle of Hannukah; the zealots who fought the Romans would have caused the destruction of the Jewish people were it not for the skilled diplomacy of Rabbi Yohannan b. Zakkai who reached an agreement with the Romans in order safely to desert Jerusalem; and so on.²⁵

In his domestic role, as leader of the world's largest post-war Hasidic community, the Rebbe was true to his politics of *Shtadlanut*. An early photograph shows him kissing the hand of King Karol of Romania, and later photos from his life in America show him courting a variety of leading politicians.²⁶ At all of his political rallies, a huge American flag covered the wall behind Teitlebaum's podium. He constantly urged his Hasidim to be upright citizens faithful to the statutes of American law. A letter written in 1945 to a follower in a D.P. Camp is addressed as follows:

To Naftali Herzka, may he be blessed for a long life, Amen! formerly the Chief Rabbi of Sharmush, and presently residing in the land of Germany, May the Lord protect it and make it prosper . . .²⁷

Apparently, even the Nazis could not rid Teitlebaum of his profound deference to the world's government, including Germany. The anti-Semite was not to be blamed for his own actions; the Jew was.

(d) The Rabbinic attitude to human suffering is perhaps best captured by the following bit of Talmudic advice:

He whose head aches, should engage in Torah study . . . and he whose entire body is wracked with pain should examine his past conduct (lest he sinned).²⁸

In short, "there is no death without sin, and no suffering without transgression."²⁹ This is true not only of the individual Jew, but of the entire Jewish nation as well. During their holiday prayers the Jews confess, "On account of our sins we were exiled from our land." The anti-Semite acts neither independently, nor senselessly. He is, rather, an agent of God's justice and vengeance and, hence, not to be held culpable for his actions. The persecution of the Jews will end with the improvement of the Jew, not with the anti-Semite. The exiled tribes will be gathered, not as a result of a political campaign against anti-Semitism, but, rather, upon the expurgation of Jewish sin.

25. Teitlebaum offers similar interpretations of subsequent eras of Jewish history. This writer is currently preparing a study of Satmar historiography.

26. A memorial volume, documenting the death and funeral rites of the Satmar Rebbe, contains hundreds of rare and telling photographs. See *The Sun Sets – Memoirs of the Holy Grand Rabbi of Satmar and Jerusalem Rebbe Joel Teitlebaum of Sainted Memory* (Brooklyn, 1980).

27. *Divrei Yoel – Mikhtavim*, Vol. I, no. 142.

28. B.T., *Eruvin*, 54a and *Berakhot*, 5a.

29. B.T., *Shabbat*, 51a.

Teitlebaum maintained this classic Rabbinic attitude and described it quite eloquently:

Behold that previously in Israel, each time the household of Jacob in every generation faced times of trouble, they would examine and investigate the causes and reasons for their affliction — namely, which sin has caused God to bring this. All this (was done) in order to be able to rectify the wrong and return to the Lord . . . for sin is the cause for all suffering.³⁰

The Rabbis' antidote for anti-Semitism was repentance. Unfortunately, as the Zionists noted, that corrective never seemed to work.

From its inception, one of modern Jewish Nationalism's greatest attractions for the Jews consisted in the severity of the problem that it promised finally to solve — anti-Semitism. A series of pogroms at the end of the nineteenth century inspired Zionism's greatest ideologues, and subsequent Jewish suffering made many more Zionists than did the writings of Hess, Pinsker, Herzl, and others. As David ben Gurion put it, "What Zionist propaganda for years could not do, disaster has wrought overnight."³¹ As persecution-weary Jews despaired of the viability of their lives in Europe, the Zionist program became ever more attractive. In one sense, therefore, anti-Semitism's success was Zionism's success. And many Zionists were, understandably, not terribly concerned with curing Europe of its disease. Having despaired of a complete remedy, they called for the removal of Jews from Europe and their isolation in Palestine, where they would be immune from anti-Semitism. The success of the Jewish Nationalist plan was contingent upon the accuracy of this terminal diagnosis.

Much has been made by Israel's enemies of this tactical link between Zionism and anti-Semitism. But Zionism has nothing to apologize for. Zionism was conceived of as a response to the threat to Jewish safety in Europe; it was also to be much more — a movement for national and cultural renaissance. And it inspired the hopeless and created literature, poetry and music. But even had it been conceived only as a response to anti-Semitism, it would have been justified. As Jacob Katz put it, "There was no need for Zionism to deny that it shared a common historical ambience with anti-Semitism."³² Still, there is a danger inherent in the relationship between anti-Semitism and Zionism; a chance that Zionists who had lost sight of the loftiest goals of their movement might develop an unhealthy interest in the preservation of anti-Semitism.

A major element in the Satmar Rebbe's critique of Zionism is the nature of its relationship with anti-Semitism. The critique is, of course, theological; in defiance of tradition, Jewish nationalism regards political activity rather than religious penitence as the most effective way to combat anti-Semitism. It is also practical; for, far from solving the prob-

30. *Va'Yoel Moshe*, Introduction, p. 5.

31. David ben Gurion, *Rebirth and Destiny of Israel*, p. 41.

32. Jacob Katz, "Zionism vs. Anti-Semitism," *Commentary* (April, 1979).

lem, Zionism has served only to increase global anti-Semitism. Using the experience of the Nazi Holocaust to illustrate his point, Teitlebaum distinguishes three ways in which the Zionists have allegedly caused, rather than cured, anti-Semitism.

(i) The Talmud warns that the punishment for the transgression of the three oaths will be the physical destruction of the Jews.³³ The Holocaust is, then, quite simply the fulfillment of that divine threat, provoked by Zionist violation of the oaths.

(ii) The Zionists, by declaring war on Hitler Germany, provoked it into initiating the Final Solution. Teitlebaum argues that the Jews would not have been exterminated had they taken a totally passive attitude to the Führer.

(iii) The Zionists deliberately instigated Nazi anti-Semitism and actively collaborated with the Reich in terrorizing the Jews. This was done in order to underscore the urgency of building a Jewish state in Palestine. In this regard Teitlebaum offers the following parable:

There was once a very evil, vengeful and hateful man who desired to burn down the house of an acquaintance of his. He hired for this purpose an expert in such matters and instructed him to do his dastardly work so that no one would sense who caused the destruction. Knowing that the victim was a very hospitable type, this expert presented himself as a wanderer who needed a place to stay. The gentleman immediately granted his request. In the middle of the night, the evildoer — having ascertained that the entire household was fast asleep — silently went and lit the house on fire and quickly returned to his bed and pretended to be asleep. A little later on, when the flames had spread, the entire household was awake and, seeing the terror that was upon them, tried desperately to salvage whatever they could from the fire. But due to their panic and sudden shock they were disorganized and unable to undertake an effective rescue action. The cunning guest who had started the entire fire also pretended to awake in shock and went immediately to “help” the landlord. Since he was emotionally settled and saw that his activities had yielded their fruit, he was able to act more effectively and save a few token items from the flames. The next morning the landlord related his bitter experiences to his friends. But along with recounting the misfortunes, he paid tribute to the importance of fulfilling the obligation of hospitality; for thanks to his own fulfillment of that imperative, God sent him a wonderful guest who “saved” much of his household . . . The parable is evident. For these evil Zionists cause by their sinfulness and forbidden political activities all of the trials and tribulations of our people, only to take on later the appearance and role of the saviors of our nation, and they succeed in this deception.³⁴

Aside from provoking the Nazis in Europe, Teitlebaum accuses the Zionists of campaigning internationally to assure that no country would

33. B.T., *Ketubot*, 110a:

“God said to the people of Israel: ‘If you keep my oaths, well and good; if not I will allow your flesh to become (prey) like that of the gazelles and the hinds of the field.’”

Teitlebaum sees this threat as a prophecy of the Holocaust.

34. *Va'Yoel Moshe*, Vol. I, no. 110.

admit the Jews fleeing Hitler Germany. This was done in order that the Jews have no choice but to run to Israel. After finishing with Europe, the Zionists went to Jewish communities in North Africa and the Middle East, and *created* anti-Semitism where previously it did not exist.

The Rebbe's analysis is, of course, contemptible. There is no truth to such accusations, which employ the rhetoric of international anti-Semitism. Of course there have been problematic episodes in Zionist history in which Zionist leaders have shown a disturbingly pragmatic interest in anti-Semitism. Elie Kedourie, for example, has chillingly described the way in which Zionists preyed on the misfortunes of the Jews in Iraq after the pogroms of Baghdad in 1941.³⁵ And, more recently, the head of the Jewish Agency, Aryeh Dulcin, has proposed that this organization assist only those Soviet Jews who would definitely end up emigrating to Israel and forsake those "bad risks" who might end up moving to America. Nonetheless, such are the unavoidable and exceptional risks of pragmatic politics which tend to lose sight of ideological principles. Despite the occasional coincidence in their short-term objectives, Zionism and anti-Semitism remain diametrically opposed to one another for, ultimately, the anti-Semite desires the destruction of the Jew and the Zionist his salvation.

During the Yom Kippur war, America's most influential Hasidic leader, the Lubavitcher Rebbe, called upon the Israelis to take Damascus. The advice was presented not as his individual opinion, which is what it was, but as his considered religious ruling — an expression of *Da'as Torah*, the sacred view of halakhic Judaism. Since 1973, the Lubavitcher Rebbe has been a vocal proponent of West-Bank annexation. He has also condemned the Camp David agreement and advised Israel to recapture the Sinai, for he insists that the Torah absolutely forbids the Jews to relinquish so much as one inch of the Holy Land to "idolators." In fact, the position of Lubavitch on the issue of the disputed territories is every bit as uncompromising as that of Gush Emunim, though not as honest. The Lubavitchers are not, and have never been, Zionists. The last two Lubavitcher Rebbes were outspoken opponents of Jewish Nationalism. A letter of Rabbi Sholom Ber Schneerson, published in 1900,³⁶ was the single most sophisticated expression of Rabbinic anti-Zionism until Teitlebaum's writings. In that letter, Schneerson asserted with confidence that Zionism had no chance of success in realizing its dream of a sovereign Jewish state. But Zionism did succeed and, with its success, old enemies

35. Elie Kedourie, "Minorities," in *The Chatham House Version* (N.Y., 1970), pp. 300-316.

36. See S.Z. Landau, Y. Rabinowitz, *Op. cit.*, pp. 57-61.

The attitude of the present Lubavitcher Rebbe to Israel and Zionism is less than perfectly consistent. He has yet to make his peace with Zionist ideology and, like Satmar, views the original Zionist *aliyah* as a violation of the three Talmudic oaths. Still, he insists that it would be a violation of Talmudic Law for the Zionist state to return any territory occupied during wartime to the Arab States. For a full presentation of the position of the Lubavitcher Rebbe on the issues of Zionism, the State of Israel, and the occupied territories, see Sholom Dov Wolpa, *Da'at Torah* (Kiryat Gat, 1979).

have suddenly become allies. These Orthodox fair-weather friends of Zionism benefit both politically and financially now from their tactical alliance with Israel. Ideologically, however, they remain opponents of the Zionist idea. They did little if anything to help build the Jewish State, and have contributed minimally to Israeli society. Still, they arrogantly make demands of Israel and expect their every requirement to be satisfied by a State whose creation they bitterly opposed.

To his credit, the Satmar Rebbe was more consistent in his dealings with the Zionists. He remained opposed to them and, consistent with that opposition, expected nothing of Zionism or of Israel. Zionism's political successes and his own diplomatic failures did not change the "truth" for Teitlebaum. This position was best stated by a British follower of the Satmarer:

From the religious point of view, the attitude to the "State of Israel" does not depend on its successes or failures in the field of economics or politics, but on its ideals and philosophy and on the extent to which these are in agreement or conflict with those of Judaism.³⁷

The Satmar Rebbe could have made his life much easier had he conveniently forgotten about the Torah's dispute with Zionism and tacitly accepted the existence of the Jewish State. He could have received much urgently needed money for his schools from Zionist agencies, as do the schools of Agudath Israel, and now Belz. He would have undoubtedly been recognized by all Orthodox Jews as one of the leading Torah sages in the world, for that he certainly was. And he would have spared himself decades of agonizing isolation and countless enemies. But, unlike many of his Orthodox colleagues, he refused to compromise principle for political or financial gain.

Teitlebaum's adamant refusal to let changing political realities influence his understanding of the Torah had bizarre consequences. It resulted in a mad theory of a world no longer ruled by Divine Providence, but, rather, possessed by demonic forces. Nothing was what it appeared to be, due to Satan's mastery of the art of deception. Despite his eccentricity, however, Teitlebaum continued to address issues of common concern to all contemporary Jewish thinkers. His striking assessment of modern Jewish history and of Israeli politics and society have earned him a place in contemporary Jewish thought, even if he was so wrong, for he concerned himself with the major items on the Jewish agenda of this century. Moreover, he evaluated those issues solely in the light of his interpretation and application of the classic sources of Judaism, and he displayed unusual erudition and mastery of that literature.

In the end, however, this theologian went too far. Speaking in the name of a tradition of religious quietism and political passivism, he inspired violence. The Zionists, he declared, became impatient with the

37. I. Domb, *The Transformation* (London, 1958), p. 3.

Jewish habit of waiting for the Messiah, and took matters into their own hands. This was their impiety. The Rebbe and his Hasidim, however, decided that they had better wait a little longer, lest they miss the Messiah. Yet, they were not as patient with their fellow Jews as they were with their God. They did not simply wait for Zionism to fail. Rather, they waged a ruthless and often bloody war against it. And that war continues. The Satmarers demonstrate in front of the United Nations, take out full page ads in the New York Times condemning the Jewish State, engage in bloody confrontations with Israeli police, establish friendly ties with Arab terrorist organizations, and physically attack Orthodox Jews who have even the flimsiest connections with the Israeli government. Like those who "kill for peace," they are violent activists in the name of a philosophy of quietism. Their methods are more than just vulgar and offensive; they contradict the very spirit of their cause.

The Alexandrer Rebbe, a figure of the last century, explained the unruly conduct of many of his Hasidim in this manner:

When the Baal Shem Tov founded the Hasidic movement, Satan feared he would be humiliated by the holiness of the new movement of faith. He therefore induced many of his own followers to join the few true Hasidim, with the results that Satan's Hasidim became the majority.³⁸

Many of Satan's Hasidim can be found in Brooklyn. There is little chance that the Satmarer's horrible tactics will be reconsidered. For Rabbi Joel has been succeeded by Rabbi Moses Teitlebaum, an unremarkable nephew who has neither the religious stature nor the intellect to modify the radical theology of his uncle. The violence will continue. The thugs of Satmar will do all they can to hurt the State of Israel. And they will do much damage to many Jews outside the State. It would have been better for all concerned had they taken seriously their Rebbe's belief that history should be left alone; for it is in God's hands.

38. J.K. Rokotsh, *Siah Sarfei Kodesh* (Lodz, 1928), Vol. IV, no. 45.

Visions of the American Jewish Messiah

ELLIOT B. GERTEL

SINCE THE DAYS OF THE FIRST KINGS OF Israel, chroniclers, psalmists and prophets have waxed poetic about a political and spiritual leader "anointed by God" (*mashiah*), whose advent would not only enhance the position of Israel, but would transform and improve the existence of all the nations of the world. "Modern" nineteenth-century rabbis, whether Orthodox or Reform, tended to regard the enlightened West as an intimation of a messianic era of universal freedom and understanding, with the notion of a messianic leader being either abolished or tabled. But in the twentieth century, immersion in the "American dream" has stimulated Jewish novelists to dream of a messianic leader once again, as did their ancestors, the inspired writers of Hebrew Scripture. Their visions are no less passionate than those of the ancients, but they reflect individual and group concerns that are as American as they are Jewish.

Ludwig Lewisohn (1882-1955) was born in Berlin, but emigrated to the United States with his parents at the age of eight. The family lived in Charleston, South Carolina, where they were totally assimilated, generally avoiding other Jews. Lewisohn received his M.A. at Columbia, but keenly felt the anti-Semitism that shattered the dreams of Jewish students bent on academic careers. He became celebrated as a critic of American literature, but served as a professor of German at Ohio State University from 1911 to 1919, since chairs of American literature were not offered to Jews at that time. In 1922, Lewisohn exposed anti-Semitism in American academic circles in *Up Stream*. In 1925, he visited Palestine, reflected on the Zionist cause, and published his impressions in *Israel*. He became the first leading American Jew in literary circles to advocate Zionism, and the fine fruit of his efforts was *The Answer: The Jew and the World* (1929), a passionate affirmation of Jewishness and of Zionism. He also wrote several novels which dealt either with Jewish themes or with marital problems. He grew more and more interested in Judaism *qua* religion, and lectured widely on the need for a creative and meaningful life. His last and best statement on Jewishness, which eloquently describes the Jewish religion and its ability to enhance modern life, is *The American Jew: Character and Destiny* (1950).

Ludwig Lewisohn's book, *Trumpet of Jubilee* (1937) is the first significant "messianic" novel by an American Jewish writer. In *The Answer*

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(1939), a memoir written soon after the publication of this work, he asserted:

My recent novel *Trumpet of Jubilee* is really a meta-Jewish novel (in quite the same sense in which metaphysical means beyond the physical) and I hope in the future to deal in fiction rather with the history of Israel than with the scene of our present fate.

That great historical novel was never written. And it is impossible to understand Lewisohn's concept of a "meta-Jewish" novel without examining something of his intellectual and psychological odyssey that led from re-affirmation of Jewishness to the penning of what, almost fifty years later, emerges as an apocalyptic novel whose like has not since been dared by an American Jewish writer.

Lewisohn's return to Judaism after his acceptance in general literary circles was dramatic and unprecedented in the Twenties. His messianic vision must be regarded as an aspect of his search for identity. In *The Island Within* (1928), Arthur Levy, an eminent physician married to a Protestant minister's daughter, reaffirms his Jewishness to the point of following the admonition of the biblical Nehemiah: "Shall we then hear it said of you, that ye do all this great evil, to trespass against our God in bringing home alien wives?" (Nehemiah 13:27).

Like most of Lewisohn's "born-again" Jewish protagonists, Arthur is the coddled child of assimilated German-Jewish parents. The kind of awareness that overtakes Arthur (and that obviously seized Lewisohn himself) is described in a short story, "The Saint," found in Lewisohn's comparatively early book, *This People* (1933):

Leon took a long walk. His heart was filled with pity for his father and mother, who lived in their hollow house with no home and no friends to whom they were bound or united by any common memories or aspirations, who had no earth under their poor feet nor any heaven over their desecrated heads and who made a clamour of such words as humanity and progress and could not truly feel the force of the former, since they could not embrace their share and portion of humanity, which was the people of Israel, and who interpreted the latter in Gentile fashion in terms of speed and production and efficiency, things which in reality meant less than nothing to their souls.

Lewisohn's books on Jews and Jewishness underscore relentlessly the ironies of Jewish self-hatred and blindness to the permanence of anti-Semitism, and cite the evils of pseudo-messianism like socialism and fascism whose very falseness is betrayed by their role in outbreaks of anti-Semitism. One novel, *Breathe Upon These* (1944), is actually a desperate attempt to expose Nazi barbarity and the dangers of fascism before the American public. It focuses on a dinner party at which German Jewish refugees (an old engineer and his physician wife) describe to a Midwestern Gentile couple (of old American stock, of course) exactly how the Nazis treat Jews and other dissidents. (It is obvious, however, that

Lewisohn did not know the full extent of Nazi barbarity.) Though propaganda (in the best sense of the word), the novel does have its moments of fine dialogue. It is also deliberate in driving home the points that the only Jewish Communists are “raw youths,” and that the Jews of Palestine are the only democratic people to be found there. To Lewisohn, identity implied duty, and his sense of the obligations of the novelist remains touching.

He regarded *Trumpet of Jubilee* as his most important novel, though the critics and the public never agreed with him. *Time* magazine compared the second part of the novel to *The Wizard of Oz*. Writing in *Haven* (1940), another memoir, which is so candid at times as to be embarrassing to the reader, Lewisohn confides that he was “abashed and sickened and actually ashamed” by the “comparatively small sales” of *Trumpet of Jubilee*. But until his death he regarded this work as highly artistic and even prophetic. In his last and best book, *The American Jew* (1950), he complained that

when in a novel *Trumpet of Jubilee* in 1937 I pointed out the accursed identity of the Nazi and Soviet systems I was not believed; I was accused of the grossest partisanship. Today all that I pleaded for in those years is accepted and is known.

Trumpet of Jubilee is a novel in two parts. The first is a typical Lewisohn story of persecution of a German-Jewish couple by the Nazis. Like all of Lewisohn’s heroes, Dr. Kurt Weiss and his wife Gina are cultured, humanitarian people with a gifted child. The Nazis frame Dr. Weiss by having his Aryan secretary throw herself at him (evil women, as we shall see, abound in most messianic novels by American Jewish writers). Weiss is incarcerated and then killed, and Mrs. Weiss escapes with her son, Gabriel, to join her family, which has foresightedly fled to France. The Weisses had been assimilated and ignorant of their Jewishness, and Lewisohn loses no opportunity to review the ironies of Jews who forgot their past in order to accept the bargain of modernity — “be modern and all differences will be forgotten” — which “modern” nations have been psychologically incapable of keeping. “There is evidently more evil in the world than we thought,” one of Lewisohn’s characters observes. “It’s been gathering as a reservoir. Now it’s spilling over.”

One might expect that Lewisohn would sour on all possibility of genuine Jewish-Christian fellowship, but he does not. In fact, throughout his novels he observes that friendship is natural between Jews and “real” Christians, and that the latter are also victims of Fascism. Gina Weiss takes her son to America, where they are helped by their family to adjust to life in “Ozark City.” Though her sense of Jewish identity has been awakened through discussions with Zionist acquaintances during her stay in France, she is awed by her assimilated American Jewish relatives in Ozark City who have “real” Christian friends and have achieved success and respect in their community.

In Ozark City, as depicted by Lewisohn, justice seems to prevail.

Gina's self-hating Jewish cousin, who mocks her Jewish loyalties and yet wants to marry her, ultimately goes insane — as befits any self-hating Jew in Lewisohn's literary universe. Gabriel and Gina, together with a Jewish lawyer who is a close friend of theirs, are even able to help Alan Jones, the altruistic son of a kind-hearted Protestant minister, who is being unjustly blackmailed by those who resent his father's liberal politics. Even the blandishments of assimilation are overcome in Ozark City. Though Gabriel, a rising young poet, is seduced by an intellectual young widow, Elizabeth Warner, a Gentile, he resolves, in the end, to marry a nice Jewish girl and to settle in Palestine.

It would seem, then, that Lewisohn's scenario is clear and complete: one part of *Trumpet of Jubilee* describing anti-Semitism and awakened Jewish identity in Europe; the second part citing the extent that the free American environment is conducive to heightened Jewish identity and purpose. Yet Lewisohn's novel is far more complex than that. It chooses to read the future and to obliterate even the liberal American haven. Some of its observations are, indeed, prophetic, such as the vision of Soviet Jews returning in large numbers to their ancestral faith.

Fascinating in the eyes of hindsight are Lewisohn's observations on the "futuristic" American scene. Roosevelt is envisioned as lecturing every other day on the radio, long after his retirement. Thoughtful leaders are elected to national office by a bare margin of the votership, while popular acclaim swaggers dangerously in the direction of a demagogue who stirs up greed, destructiveness, and hatred. Post-War Europe and Asia are described as consisting of roving Communist and Fascist hordes. In Palestine, however, Jews have made peace with the Arabs. As one old Zionist explains:

You've read and heard how once the Arabs feared and hated us? They don't any longer. In the long run they were convinced by the rightness of our intent. We struck no blow. We never retaliated. We went on doing good. It worked. In the long run it worked. Goodness works. Justice works.

Again, one is tempted to conclude that Lewisohn's messianic vision is easily extracted from the novel; if not from the plot then from the dialogue. Does Lewisohn then affirm the victory of altruism and justice? Not if one considers the conclusion of the novel, in which his messianic vision is prefaced by nothing less than the destruction of the world. All armies swarm to Palestine in order to wage the battle of Armageddon. With sweeping apocalyptic detail, reminiscent of the Apocryphal books and the Dead Sea Scrolls, the author describes the marches of the nations on Zion and the call to battle that resounds in every corner of the world. In fact, the world seems united by the frenzy of the fight. Gina says to Gabriel's beautiful Jewish wife, Eve:

Let him go, my daughter. It is more than twenty years now since his father died. And I know that retribution belongs to God. But perhaps Gabriel and the many thousands like him are being forged by God into the instrument of

his justice. Let him go, Eve. Let him strike the first blow. It may be that then our little David will never have to strike any blow. It may be then that *his* world will be a world of peace.

Despite these words, the reader still does not come to Lewisohn's real vision. Once more, the psychological complexity of his messianic yearnings is veiled by a seemingly definitive statement. For it is in the stark apocalyptic finale of the novel that one gains the most insight into Lewisohn's criteria for a messiah-figure, and realizes that he hardly envisions a world at peace after a great and decisive war.

The novel's "Epilogue" switches the scene abruptly from Gina's idealistic war hopes to the "old concrete-and-steel catacombs which had been built during the third world war under all the cities." Man, reduced to a primitive level, has his blond beasts battling again. But there are those who seek out the remaining Israelites, or at least those who still tell stories about them. Whatever decency is left in the world is upheld by recounting legends of God and Israel, legends in which motifs of Judaism and Christianity are mingled for lack of literary records. In this vision, it is the bard, the story-teller, who wins out in the end, even over the prophet or sage. Gabriel, the poet, the American of German-Jewish descent who returns to his Judaism after working on an epic poem about Moses, is the harbinger of the end of days: human barbarity checked only by poetry and legend.

Lewisohn, the first American Jewish writer to relate his messianic vision, actually presents the writer's concept of his own importance: the messianic power of story-telling. Even before the atomic bomb was ever used or discussed, he envisioned the possibility of a radically-changed world-order in *punishment for society's resistance to the poetic visionary*. Lewisohn embraces Jewishness because it makes him a better, a more honest writer. Yet he leaves behind his Jewishness and even his faith in America in order to take up the cause of the story-teller at the expense of the world itself. His bard-messiahs salvage a remnant of the human imagination from ruins that are judged to be inevitable.

While *Trumpet of Jubilee* is not the greatest Jewish novel of its era, it is, by any standards, an honorable attempt at confronting serious spiritual issues. Like all of Lewisohn's novels, however, it suffers from its nineteenth-century syntax and style, and is weighted down by long moralistic asides that even a George Eliot could not always handle with felicity. It is also a pedantic novel in which long passages in French and German are too frequently paraded. Yet it introduces persistent elements into the messianic gropings of American Jewish writers. Gabriel and his mother learn about real estate; they build cottages and collect rents. As we noted above, Gabriel overcomes the seductive charms of a Gentile woman and helps a friend to escape disgrace at the hands of what Lewisohn describes as a "slut." Finally, Gabriel spares nothing to battle anti-Semitism, whether with money or influence or on the battlefield.

Property, women and anti-Semites become the test in two other significant messianic visions of American Jews that were published in close succession almost forty years after *Trumpet of Jubilee*. They are *In The Days of Simon Stern* (1973) by Arthur A. Cohen, and *The Temple* (1975) by Jerome Weidman.

Weidman ought to be considered first because his earliest book, *I Can Get It For You Wholesale* (1937), was published in the same year as Lewisohn's *Trumpet of Jubilee* and received far more acclaim. One can only speculate as to whether Lewisohn was shocked by the success of a twenty-four-year-old's brilliant and funny exposé of a Garment District anti-hero who was ashamed of his Jewishness, cheated in business with schemes as unscrupulous as they were ingenious, and made frequent remarks about "kikes" and "hebes" that anti-Semites could envy.

It did not seem, in 1937, that Weidman would one day join Lewisohn in penning a significant American Jewish messianic vision, and, yet, the parallels between the work of these two men were already discernable. The elements of property (or money), women, and anti-Semitism are there, but Heshie Bogen, Weidman's protagonist, is purposely drawn as one who fails to meet the challenge, and achieves dubious success rather than messianic qualifications. The pathos of Heshie's occasional realizations of his failure as a human being is no mean tribute to Weidman's artistry.

Heshie stereotypes Jewish physical appearance, describing the nose of a nice girl whom he respects as "just the kind of Jewish-looking squash I'd been spending three-quarters of my waking hours since I was thirteen trying to avoid." In fact, such stereotyping is a stock motif throughout Weidman's novels, whether in the mouths of protagonists or in the author's own narratives. Yet Lewisohn himself set the stage for such stereotyping. In *The Island Within*, Arthur Levy cites "nervousness" as a "Jewish" quality and, throughout his works, Lewisohn does comment on Jewish physical traits, though usually for the purpose of glorifying them.

Like the prophets of the Hebrew Bible, Lewisohn and Weidman caricature the Jewish people in order to persuade them that they need to be redeemed. (I wonder whether there would have been so much religious anti-Semitism had the Prophets not been around for Christians to quote as evidence of Jewish baseness. But, then, again, had there been no Jewish sins, and had better things not been expected of the Jews, there would be no Prophets to quote.) One suspects that Lewisohn and Weidman expect much from the Jews. Weidman, in particular, has been accused of "Jewish anti-Semitism" because of some of the baser Jewish types he presented in *I Can Get It For You Wholesale* and in *What's In It For Me?* Yet one could, I suppose, accuse the biblical prophets of anti-Semitism, as well. Not that Weidman is a prophet; he is too sympathetic for that! Throughout his novels, he demonstrates the ability to depict the psychological anatomy of the stinker with great insight.

The appeal of Weidman's novels is both understandable and enduring. His works recreate the loves and hatreds of childhood, the trauma and security of school and scout troop, and the conflicting complex relationships of parents and guardians to children, teachers to students, and childhood sweethearts to each others' memories. Weidman proved long ago that the Lower East Side of New York can be as exotically Jewish a setting for a story as the East European *shtetl*. And the plots of his novels are as compelling as any murder mystery, not because there are corpses to be claimed (though sometimes there are), but because the most compelling mysteries are those whose solutions enable the individual to master his past and so chart his future.

The most telling of Weidman's novels, Jewishly speaking, are *The Enemy Camp* (1958), *The Sound of Bow Bells* (1962), and *The Temple*. I regard these as a trilogy and would characterize their sequence as follows: thesis, revised thesis, and updated thesis. As we shall see, Weidman's departure from the Hegelian thesis-antithesis-synthesis is somewhat unfortunate, but not fatal.

In *The Enemy Camp*, Weidman presents George Hurst, a young accountant, who, although married to a Gentile woman, is unable to overcome his childhood fear and distrust of Gentiles, inculcated in him by his Aunt Tessie. The reader learns that when George announced to her that he plans to marry a Gentile, she threatened to disown him, but her brother, Uncle Zisha, shouted:

Don't listen to her! . . . She was always afraid. She was always hiding in corners from the world. . . . Let her hide. You be different. Don't make a hole for yourself and creep into it. Don't make yourself a private ghetto. Do what your heart says, not your religion. To be a man is more important than to be a Jew.

Through flashbacks, one learns how George came to make the decision of intermarriage that led to his aunt's death. He begins to head in that direction when he hides behind the wealth of rich Jews who use money for the same reason: fear of the Gentile world. His tranquil suburban life is ultimately upset, not by Gentiles, but by the return of two Jews whom he had always loved, two childhood friends: the girl he once wanted to marry, and the school chum whom he idolized, against his own better judgment. In *The Enemy Camp*, Weidman presents the thesis that, once George faces the truth about his relationship to these childhood friends, he can overcome his fear of Gentiles, take Uncle Zisha's advice, and live happily ever after with his wife and two sons.

In *The Sound of Bow Bells*, Weidman revises the thesis. Samuel Silver, a Jewish writer who has prostituted himself by divesting his stories of their Jewish content for sale in *The American Bride*, questions the course that his life has taken and seeks to come to terms with his Jewishness. Silver is haunted by the memory of his (Jewish) wife, Jenny, and for good reason: it is she who forced him to prostitute his writings, losing her respect for

him in the process, and yet constantly telling him how “Jewish” he is. She almost ruins his life, and he must face the truth about her before he can hope to find integrity in his writing, meaning in his Jewishness, and satisfaction in his life.

I shall not spoil *The Sound of Bow Bells* for the reader by revealing its plot and ending. Suffice it to say that it is the best-written of all Weidman’s novels. In dialogue, structure, and uncanny use of flashback it is a mystery in the best sense of the world, and may well be the most finely-crafted Jewish novel of all time.¹ What concerns us here is that Weidman decides that, despite what he suggested in *The Enemy Camp*, knowing the truth about the past is not really sufficient for coming to grips with it. One must also assume a responsibility for it. If one is Jewish, one must *be* Jewish, and not simply acknowledge one’s fears or mistakes.

It is unfortunate that *The Sound of Bow Bells* could not have been Weidman’s last word on the subject of Jewish identity, for it is his best book and probably the finest study in reaffirmation of Jewishness to be found in the novel genre. Weidman makes his most courageous statement on Jewishness to date in *The Temple*, but, unlike *The Sound of Bow Bells*, it is a poorly-crafted novel. After a while, one senses its inordinate length. A conscientious English teacher would have a field-day picking out the excessive and unnecessary use of sentence fragments. And the pedestrian language of narrator and characters alike becomes tedious.

Stylistically speaking, then, *The Temple* is a strange medium for a messianic vision. Here, the messianic figure is Dave Dehn, a World War II veteran who determines to build his own Jewish suburban community in an “exclusive” area in New York State. In this novel, Gentiles are still viewed as the “enemy camp.” But Dave Dehn is a fearless man, and the Gentiles he confronts are more ferocious in the flesh than those who inhabit the fears of Weidman’s previous characters.

Weidman introduces motifs into the messianic vision that Lewisohn never considered. The initiation rites for the young, would-be messiah are clearly delineated. He must experience the viciousness of Gentiles. Dehn saw his *bar mitzvah* teacher, an old rabbi, being set on fire by a Gentile youth. He knows how to see through the “goy euphemisms” of more civilized, corporate Jew-haters. Most important, he was present, as a soldier, at the liberation of Buchenwald.

The messianic figure, as drawn by Weidman, must also be able to beat the Gentiles at their own game. Dehn marries one in order to use her non-Jewish presence to buy land from anti-Semites. When Catholic War Veterans bomb Dehn’s construction site, he sets off a bomb in their lodge. When his unfaithful wife tries to make a fool of him, he is able to beat her

1. Particularly interesting is the feminist aspect of the novel. Weidman is able to present Jennie as both ruthless and pathetic, as both predator and victim. His characterization of her is nothing less than brilliant and uncanny, and ought to be considered by writers on Jewish feminism.

back into her place until an automobile accident rids him of her altogether.

Weidman's messianic figure must, finally, have a program. Dehn offers housing to Jewish families free of charge, but insists that they sign up for the religious education of their children. He designs his central temple-office-apartment according to strict specifications, including the unusual shape of the structure and the patterning of the sanctuary after old downtown synagogues.

These new motifs, added to Lewisohn's paradigm of property, women, and anti-Semitism, yield a messiah who is warrior rather than poet. "When the Dave Dehn's can't get it up any more," one character in *The Temple* observes, "the bastards will jump us." It is clear throughout *The Temple* that Weidman regards the State of Israel as inspiration for the toughness of Dehn and for the success of his community. Leader and participants alike find courage in the birth and struggle of the State. Dehn observes that, by recognizing Israel, Harry Truman found a way for him to shake the "closet Jews" out in the open.

This is a novel interpretation of the prophecy that the re-establishment of the Jewish State will herald the messianic age. The other novelty in Weidman's story (also a novelty with precedent in the tradition) is that David Dehn, the messianic figure, is destined for destruction. He even has a flawed character, as a hostile Italian policeman observes:

David Dehn is a bad person who for purely selfish reasons decided to do good. He did it, and up here in Beechwood we all benefited, but that doesn't change what he is. A bad person.

There is no doubt that Dave Dehn is not a paragon of virtue. His life-style is hardly that of a messiah.

As it turns out, Dehn must die (wearing his father's *tallis*, no less). An investigator for a Jewish magazine discovers that his whole empire is built on stolen S.S. funds. While I have avoided giving away Weidman's more ingenious turns of plot, I believe that this one is too trivial and, therefore, requires critical scrutiny. Weidman fails to convince the reader that Dehn's "sin" merits his destruction. At the very worst, he is a Robin Hood type. After all, he is not perfect enough to be a Christ-figure. In the end, he emerges as a messianic fall-man in the mold of the Rabbinic conception of the "Messiah, son of Joseph," the warrior who will die in battle uniting the tribes of Israel and fighting apocalyptic battles before the advent of the "Messiah, son of David," the harbinger of universal peace. (Scholars believe that the Rabbinic preoccupation with a "Messiah, son of Joseph" began as a response to the ill-fated revolts against Rome in which Bar Kochba fell.)

I am not certain whether Weidman is aware of this twist in Rabbinic theology.² I suspect, however, that his messianic figure is intended to be as

2. It would seem that Weidman's knowledge of the classical tradition is not as sound as his expertise in the language and culture of New York's Lower East Side. In *The Temple*, he

non-theological as possible. Dehn seems to represent Weidman's most updated thesis on the task of the modern Jew: *Being a Jew* in order to be a whole person is not enough, as it was in *The Sound of Bow Bells*. One must stand up for the Jewish causes; one must be a *fighting Jew*. Weidman's messianic vision is intended to "redeem" Jews who have not yet come to this conclusion, but it can do nothing for modern Jews who want more out of being Jewish.

For Jews who want to move beyond pride and pugnaciousness into a more classical state of redemption, Arthur A. Cohen offers that promise in *In The Days of Simon Stern*, Stern being the traditional messiah himself. Cohen is theologically bold in presenting his messianic vision. But theology can run thin in the novel genre. In fact, the weakest aspects of this novel are Cohen's attempts at theological cuteness. At one point, he records some of Stern's "witty" observations: "It is because God is a gossip, an uncontrollable talker, that we know of him, and look what's become of us because we know." What becomes of Cohen is that he weighs down a decent story with observations that add little to his characters and even less to our knowledge about God.

Fortunately, it is not theology as such, but rather the role that theology can play in enriching the life of the contemporary Jew, that Cohen presents in his novel. In fact, it is Cohen's commitment to the mystique and literary power of theology that protects the integrity of the novel from its author's own tendency to camouflage his message behind sociological jargon, experimental (but sometimes effective) literary forms,³ and digressive observations. It would seem that writing a theological novel entails some embarrassment about the use of theology as well as a fear that one may be misusing the novel form. Cohen seems to overcompensate by using as many literary tricks as possible.

Yet despite Cohen's awkwardness, his theological novel is unique precisely because he has come the way of Lewisohn and Weidman, moving from explorations of the assimilationist mentality to dramatic accounts of recovered Jewish identity to a messianic vision. Cohen's first novel, *The Carpenter Years* (1967), focuses on Edgar Morrison, an accountant for a small-town YMCA, who is, in reality, Morris Edelman of New York. The first part of the novel explores Morrison's far from fulfilling new life, and his relationship to his Christian wife. In the second part of

describes rituals that just do not exist: Prayers described as being said on weekdays that are read only on Festivals; prayers recalled being uttered in Yiddish but that can be said only in Hebrew. Furthermore, Weidman does a great disservice to Judaism by proclaiming that women "are not permitted in the presence of the Torah." This is just not so in Jewish Law, according to which even a woman in menstruation cannot render a Torah scroll "impure."

3. Most brilliant in Cohen's novel is his use of the parable of "The Legend of the Last Jew on Earth" (originally published in *Commentary*, November 1972), which is to *In the Days of Simon Stern* what "Before the Law" is to Kafka's *The Penal Colony*. But even Cohen's fine parable is unduly protracted by use of the epistolary and transcript genres. There may be some symbolism here, too, if the name *Stern* (German and Yiddish for "star") intimates *Bar Kochba* ("Son of a Star"), the ancient Rabbinic messianic hero who led a revolt against Rome.

The Carpenter Years, Cohen introduces Morrison's abandoned Jewish son, Daniel, who applies for a job as a psychologist as a ruse for observing his long-lost dad, and seems to resolve, at least for the moment, not to repeat his father's absurd charade.

The Carpenter Years is a straightforward and effective short novel. *In the Days of Simon Stern* is effective, too, but the reader must beware of the detours that Cohen provides for his own diversion in order to endure the awesome task of mixing theology and fiction. One must, for example, not be thrown off course by Cohen's musings, through Nathan of Gaza, the fascinating blind man who narrates the novel, or through Stern or other characters. Toward the beginning of the novel, Nathan tells us that the

Redeemer, like the shamans of the East, descends into the most populous regions of the underworld and there among his familiars contains all wretchedness. The Redeemer elevates wretchedness by being all-wretched.

Yet the novel is not really concerned with the wretchedness of man, nor even with the plight of Holocaust-survivors (though Cohen is obviously sensitive to both of these situations). Nor does it focus primarily on the wretchedness of Simon Stern's life, though we learn of his suffering with childhood disease, physical handicaps, guilt over the tragic death of his parents, anti-Semites, and resistance to his noble efforts.

Like Weidman's hero, David Dehn, Simon Stern is a scrapper. Stern is more refined, more intellectual in his approach to things, more articulate, but he is victorious at the same kind of social and economic battles that Dehn wins in his coarser, steet-wise, but equally intelligent way. Stern fights back when he is picked on as a child, and resolves to build up wealth and power which he uses to put anti-Semites in their place. "He decided he wanted no profession," Cohen tells us, "not law, not medicine, nothing that resembled accommodation to power without power itself. It was money, but it was power more than money, that interested him." Unlike Weidman's David Dehn, Cohen's Simon Stern does not grab ready-made fortunes. And, as Simon Stern himself points out when he plays stand-up comedian while visiting a Jewish night club, great wealth makes one independent enough not to be bought off. The way to enjoy Cohen's novel is to focus on the action and dialogue that help us to understand the characters, and to shun the obvious intellectual distractions.

As if to counter Weidman's messianic vision, Cohen has an important character, Dr. Klay (who represents a more intellectual approach to piety and commitment), observe that the Holocaust teaches that being Jewish has come down to an "option of knowledge or an option of stupidity." Redemption does not reside in pride and commitment as such (as Weidman would have it), for these are now the only sensible choice. To Cohen, Jews must endure to be responsible, and they must perform this task with a unique "paranoid self-possession." On the Lower East Side of New York, Simon Stern establishes the fortress for his special community, The Society for the Rescue and Resurrection of the Jews, an enclave in which

to cultivate the resources of stubbornness, a remnant whose strength is to lie in mutual love and helpfulness and disdainful removal and estrangement from all others. Like Dave Dehn, Simon Stern bids for buildings and pores over architectural plans. Messianic figures in American Jewish novels are definitely adept at real estate transactions and successful in establishing agencies for social service.

Stern's Society is a redemptive venture in the spirit of traditional prophetic and rabbinic theology because it addresses itself to the world and not merely to Jews. (Dehn's community in *The Temple* is intended exclusively for the Jews.) Of course, given the nature of Stern's Society, the classical theology must be somewhat eccentric. As Cohen's charming divine, Rabbi Lazare Steinman, explains:

We shall do differently than did others in the lineage of our past. We shall not make the world worse that *we* might be saved; nor shall we make it better that *they* might be saved. We shall hold up to the world the mirror of its desecration. We shall become the death's head of the world, the skull through whose eyes and apertures the world will see itself.

There are other motifs of classical theology (albeit with clever, "modern" twists) in Cohen's concept of redemption that ought to be enumerated here. In the spirit of the biblical prophets, the redeemer — Simon Stern — is intended from birth for his sacred mission. He realizes that only the "license of the Law" will enable him to command deference. Hence, Cohen is the only writer who deals with the classical theological issue of the role of the Law in messianic times. Also, Stern makes sure that man's "evil imagination" is allowed to function in his special enclave. He accepts a sinister character into the Society, knowing full well that his presence will prove destructive.⁴

In accordance with rabbinic and kabbalistic views of redemption, Cohen has Dr. Klay observe to Nathan of Gaza:

Do you imagine, blind Nathan, that the work of redemption is done without the cooperation of the redeemed? I do not. It is no action of authority to which men submit when they are saved to themselves. Simon Stern can do nothing for us unless we will it. Baltar [the sinister character] cannot harm us unless we allow it. That is the fact of the matter. Redemption is cooperative.

To Cohen, redemption is *shared belief in redemption*. Simon Stern is a flawed Messiah. (After all, his assistant is named Nathan of Gaza, after Shabbatai Zvi's infamous cohort). When Stern's enclave is almost destroyed, he moves uptown (despite his previous fears of uptown society) and builds again. Simon Stern emerges as a *real* messiah because classical Jewish theology and its images are real to Cohen. Though Stern shares the

4. Simon Stern observes: "Were it not for the evil imagination of men there would not be houses and homes, granaries and fields, wives and progeny." This is obviously a paraphrase of the Rabbinic observation that "but for the evil inclination (*yezer ha-ra*), no man would build a house, take a wife, and beget children" (*Midrash Bereshit Rabbah* 9:7; see also Babylonian Talmud, *Yoma* 69b).

weaknesses of the other messianic figures we have examined, he is convincing because Cohen is convinced that theology is the best response to the situation of the American Jew. And because Simon Stern is convincing as the messiah, Cohen's novel is convincing, despite its mixture of disparate genres and its unnecessary length. It is the most successful and authentically Jewish of the messianic novels we have examined precisely because the messianic vision is, first and foremost, a theological hope that, like fiction, must be believed to be effective.

Lewisohn's apocalyptic affirmation of the redemptive value of storytelling did not take hold among American Jewish writers. While he sought out his Jewish identity in order to be a more effective writer, Weidman and Cohen regard Jewish survival as a redemptive factor in and of itself. Lewisohn affirmed his Jewishness in order to transcend it; Weidman looks to Jewishness in order to make the craft of writing a source of self-confidence. Cohen would blend theology and fiction so that the reader might believe in what is worthy of belief.

Yet all the messianic visions we have examined are truly American in that standing up and fighting, knowing how to handle women, and success at accumulating and wielding dollars are important to our novelists. The latter skill, especially, is crucial, for it is both typically American and typically Jewish. Though Lewisohn preferred to focus on the storyteller, he could have spoken for Weidman and Cohen when he observed of Arthur Levy, the protagonist of *The Island Within*, that

suddenly [Arthur] understood that marked Jewish absorption in business. Money was not success, money was security, weapon, defense, it built a home in a homeless world; it was the only reliance in the evil day. The enemy was never to be reasoned with. He might be bought off.

To Lewisohn, Weidman and Cohen, the messianic figure is, at the very least, one who can utilize the American dream to overcome the European nightmare.

Academia and the Holocaust

ALAN L. BERGER

THIS ESSAY IS A REFLECTION ON THE RELATIONSHIP of Hitler's years of slaughter — what is infelicitously termed Holocaust¹ — to the assumptions of university life and its methods of teaching. I am convinced that universities are at best marginal and, in certain cases, poor places to discover and to teach values and I wish, therefore, to argue that academics need to reexamine the foundations of their scholarship. Moreover, the Holocaust, having become grist for the academic mill, is now threatened with death by a thousand qualifications. For example, Elie Wiesel has observed that "yesterday people said, 'Auschwitz, never heard of it.'" "Now they say, 'Oh yes, we know all about it.'" The second statement underscores the perils involved in attempting to teach about the annihilation of the Jews.

Technological sophistication coupled with linguistic impoverishment has left academics ethically unmusical. Like the inhabitants of Plato's cave, university professors are transfixed by illusions. Academia's shadow idols are abstraction and generalization, professionalism and objectivity. The academy strives to understand while simultaneously shunning the particularity which alone can grant access to broader areas of knowledge. Scholarship which loses sight of the human ends as intellectual fascism.

The two poles around which Holocaust studies revolve have been articulated by Elie Wiesel and Richard Rubenstein. Wiesel, the survivor, views the Holocaust as a sacred subject. "One should take off one's shoes," he observes, "when entering its domain, one should tremble each time one pronounces the word."² However, there is another and frequently unexplored dimension to Holocaust implications. Rubenstein writes:

Until ethical theorists and theologians are prepared to face without sentimentality the kind of action it is possible freely to perpetrate under conditions of utter respectability in an advanced, contemporary society, none of their assertions about the existence of moral norms will have much credibility. To repeat, no laws were broken and no crimes were committed at Auschwitz . . . no credible punishment was meted out — Truly, the twen-

1. Holocaust is a sanitized word which has entered the public vocabulary. Both inaccurate and inadequate (see below), Holocaust is the name given to Nazi Germany's murder of European Jewry. More appropriate to the horror is its designation as Auschwitz, largest of the Nazi death factories. This essay utilizes the term Holocaust only because of its public recognition.

2. Lily Edelman, "A Conversation with Elie Wiesel" in *Responses to Elie Wiesel*, edited by Harry James Cargas (New York: Persea Books, 1978).

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tieth century has been the century par excellence that is beyond good and evil.³

Both Wiesel and Rubenstein, despite their vastly different conclusions, view the Holocaust as a *novum*. Wiesel compares the enormity of Auschwitz to the revelation at Sinai. Rubenstein, on his part, demystifies the Holocaust, claiming that the Nazis successfully breached a hitherto unbreachable moral and political barrier (exterminating the Jews) owing to their highly developed bureaucracy and their superior technology. Both positions form part of the total event. Rather than struggle with this tension, academics, apparently embarrassed by notions of holiness, stress social science categories, finding them more amenable to objectivity.

Academia and Objectivity

Academia rightly distinguishes itself from society at large by refraining from the easy temptations of sloganeering and provincialism when dealing with crucial civilizational issues. Dispassionate research broadens the horizon, enabling new constellations of possibilities to emerge. Removed from the intense passions of the moment, academics are able to supply analogies, furnish historical antecedents and, most important, lend perspective. But, too often, this dispassionate condition results in a kind of moral abstentionism. University professors frequently end as bystanders forever tentative, fearing a moral stance as an assault upon their professional status.

Objectivity, learned from Greek culture, heralded by seventeenth-century science and carefully nurtured in succeeding centuries, has attained semi-sacred status not only among academics, but is, as well, a societal norm, having become the guideline for attorneys, bureaucrats, corporate executives, and physicians, among others. However, objectivity is based upon a presumption of rationality which is, itself, another victim of the gas chambers and ovens. Ethically unanchored objectivity frequently metamorphizes into moral betrayal. In short, universities uphold objectivity — which is dignified as professionalism — but which is, in reality, only pseudo-professionalism, without a similar stress on compassion.

Elitism, another unspoken assumption of university existence, may be equally culpable. Universities have a right to demand excellence and, if this is what is meant by elitism, there can be little definitional quarrel. However, elitism among intellectuals frequently breeds indifference. Commitment and concern for community are the first casualties of intellectual fascism.

Man has increasingly become the measure of all things. His prometh-

3. Richard Rubenstein, *The Cunning of History* (New York, Hagerstown, San Francisco, London: Harper Colophon Books, 1978), p. 67.

ean arrogance, coupled with great technological skill, has produced power but not compassion, order without meaning, and progress instead of salvation. Somewhere along the way universities began producing parts for the societal machine, at the expense of living the “examined life.” Congratulating themselves on attaining objectivity, the universities have admitted a Trojan Horse. It needs to be recognized that what apostasy is to theology, elitist objectivity (pseudo-professionalism) is to teaching.

Writing in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Hannah Arendt reports the emergence of a nineteenth-century tendency which is distressingly contemporary among academics:

The cynical or bored indifference in the face of death or other personal catastrophes, the passionate inclination toward the most abstract notions as guides for life, (and a) general contempt for even the most obvious rules of common sense.⁴

Specifically concerning the Holocaust, Bruno Bettelheim reflects on the guilt of physicians in the so-called medical experiments in various death camps, lamenting their pride in professional skill and knowledge irrespective of moral implication. He views this as dangerous. “Auschwitz is gone,” observes Bettelheim, “but as long as this attitude remains with us we shall not be safe from the indifference to life at its core.”⁵ His utterance is, I fear, prophetic. Universities accentuate and multiply skills courses while regularly deemphasizing and eliminating courses in ethics. Although frequently performed as ethically neutral acts (a course’s fate typically depends upon enrollment), the results are disastrous. Skills are refined without any moral limit on their use.

A Literary Perspective

The need for academics to engage in a prolonged period of soul-searching is urgent, but its expression appears muted. For example, only two fictional Jewish professors react to the Holocaust — Moses E. Herzog and the less well-known Sol Nazerman. Saul Bellow’s Herzog is an academic unimpressed by the “commonplaces of the Wasteland outlook, the cheap mental stimulants of Alienation, the cant and rant of pipsqueaks about Inauthenticity and Forlornness.” Herzog does not enjoy the respect of his academic colleagues. They are upset by his emotionalism which is perceived as an irrelevant concern for everyday truths, and by his refusal to engage in chic apocalypticism. Herzog, for his part, is bitterly critical of spurious elitism. Writing to Professor Shapiro, he denounces such elitism, holding it at least partly responsible for European totalitarianism and

... reaching at last the point of denying the humanity of the industrialized “banalized” masses. It was easy for the Wastelanders to be assimilated to

4. Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1966), III, p. 316.

5. Bruno Bettelheim, *The Informed Heart* (Glencoe: The Free Press, 1960), p. 262.

totalitarianism. Here the responsibility of artists remains to be assessed. To have assumed . . . that the deterioration of language and its debasement was tantamount to dehumanization led straight to cultural fascism (p. 76).

Few academics recognize the validity of Herzog's warning: "How quickly the visions of genius become the canned goods of the intellectuals."

Sol Nazerman, the Pawnbroker, is, like Herzog, a victim. Unlike him, Nazerman is a death camp survivor. Edward Lewis Wallant employs the figure of a displaced academic, professor of the history of ideas prior to the cataclysm, who metamorphizes after the war as front man for a major crime figure. Nazerman has abandoned, and been abandoned by, the morally corrupt and ideologically bankrupt university value system. He bitterly warns his assistant against the seductions of so-called culture: "I do not trust God or politics or newspapers or music or art." He is most suspicious of "people and their talk, for they have created hell with their talk . . ." Although failing to pursue the implications for academia, is Wallant (perhaps subconsciously) portraying the role played by academics in Nazi Germany? What are the ethical moorings of scholars and teachers who, when faced with the choice of losing their university positions or supporting the Nazis, chose, in the vast majority, the latter course?⁶ Would contemporary academics act differently?

Pseudo-Professionalism and Objectivity in Nazi Germany

Pseudo-professionalism and objectivity were commonplace in Nazi Germany. How they came about and what they resulted in are questions of more than passing interest. If the past is but prologue, we owe to our present, and stake to our future existence, the obligation not only of learning history's lessons, but determining their contemporary implications. Only one generation separates us from the Holocaust. Surely that is too soon to forget the lessons of perverted professionalism. The preponderance of academics, corporate executives and physicians among the murderers raises the most fundamental questions about modernity. Civilizational assumptions in modernity, owing, no doubt, to the fact that man inhabits a desacralized world — Herzog laments the "decay of the religious foundations of civilization" — have less to do with illumination and are more concerned with attaining technical competence. Value-free performance is a hallmark of modernity. It is instructive to recall Raul Hilberg's description of the murderous *Einsatzgruppen* (SS) leadership:

These men were in no sense hoodlums, delinquents, common criminals, or sex maniacs. Most were intellectuals. All we know is that they brought to

6. Arendt notes that the general mentality of modern German scholars was heavily influenced by intellectuals of German romanticism. This dubious heritage yielded actions which "proved more than once that hardly an ideology can be found to which they (modern German scholars) would not willingly submit if the only reality — which even a romantic can hardly afford to overlook — is at stake, the reality of their position" (*The Origins of Totalitarianism*, II, p. 168).

their new task all the skills and training which, as men of thought, they were capable of contributing. These men, in short, became efficient killers.⁷

Three Examples

Dr. Joseph Mengele, the infamous “angel of death” at Auschwitz, attended a pregnant woman prisoner. According to an eye-witness account, Mengele

took all correct medical precautions during childbirth, rigorously observing all aseptic principles, cutting the umbilical cord with greatest care, etc. But only half an hour later he sent mother and infant to be burned in the crematorium.⁸

The corporate elite also had no difficulty divorcing skills from values. Five of I.G. Farben’s top executives inspected I.G. Auschwitz, the firm’s slave labor factory.⁹ Passing two Jewish scientist inmates, one of the directors said to an SS man, “This Jewish swine could work a little faster.” Another director, not to be outdone by his companion, added, “If they can’t work, let them perish in the gas chamber.” Dr. Löhner-Beda, one of the Jewish scientists, was pulled from his group, then beaten and kicked to death.¹⁰

The record of German academics, nowhere systematically reported, is equally appalling. Max Weinrich writes that “German scholarship provided the ideas and techniques which led to and justified this unparalleled slaughter.”¹¹ It is a pity that there was no Nuremberg Trial against professors as such.¹² Few academics and intellectuals have learned to accept responsibility for the consequences (political and otherwise) of their ideological preachments. This divorce of academia from reality is nowhere clearer than in the statement of Martin Heidegger, one of the ranking philosophers in the world. His scholarship is read, studied, and pondered with great care in contemporary universities. Yet how many professors assigning Heidegger’s works know, or care, about his actions as Rector of Freiburg University? In that capacity, Heidegger wrote to his students admonishing them:

7. Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of European Jews* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1967), p. 189.

8. Bettelheim, *Op. cit.*, utilizes O. Lengyel’s account from her *Five Chimneys, The Story of Auschwitz* (Chicago: Ziff Davis, 1947, p. 147).

9. I.G. Auschwitz was actually located at Buna, the slave center directly adjacent to Auschwitz.

10. Hilberg, *Op. cit.*, p. 596.

11. Max Weinrich, *Hitler’s Professors* (New York: YIVO, 1946), p. 6.

12. The Nuremberg Trials had specific categories for physicians (most of whom were university professors), attorneys, high ranking military officers, politicians, and for corporate executives. Law professors had spent the war years condemning to death Jews and other opponents of Hitler. Professor Doctor Reinhard Maurach, teacher of Criminal Law at Munich, testified that SS General Otto Ohlendorf (holder of a doctorate in Jurisprudence, who had studied at three German universities), commandant of *Einsatzgruppe D* which murdered 90,000 people, the overwhelming majority of whom were Jews, had not committed any criminal offense. Ohlendorf, asserted Maurach, had been furthering the aims of the Reich. Maurach continues to be a highly respected law professor. For a vivid and sobering account of Nuremberg and its aftermath, see Benjamin B. Ferencz, *Less Than Slaves* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979).

Not doctrines and "ideas" be the rules of your being. The Führer himself and alone is the present and future German reality and its law. Learn ever deeper to know: that from now on each and every thing demands decision, and every action, responsibility. Heil Hitler!¹³

Ironically, Heidegger's call for decision and responsibility was made to those who had been barred from all possibility of self-responsibility and freedom of choice.¹⁴

The above record appears to suggest rather strongly that education has abandoned its humanizing task. The new product is described by Franklin H. Littell as a technically competent barbarian, whose education has "trained him to think in ways that eliminate questions of ultimate responsibility."¹⁵ The aphorist, Elias Canetti, states the problem in its fundamental terms: "We have no standard any more for anything, ever since human life is no longer the standard." Is this situation reversible? Dare we think of values in a radically disenchanted world, a world in which there appears to be no restraint upon man's actions?

Values imply standards. Ideally, education is training in human potential and responsibility. What possible meaning could this goal have in the post-Holocaust world? Wiesel reports seeing himself in a mirror after the war, for the first time since he had been taken from the ghetto. "From the depths of the mirror," he writes, "a corpse gazed back at me." Is this the contemporary image of man?

Practically speaking, the question is: What is the relationship between teaching and being human? Professors and students must constantly ask what values are illuminated by the application of skills. The dissonance between what is taught and the world we live in seem overwhelming.

Holocaust Specificity

Wiesel correctly notes that the Holocaust has become a "desanctified theme." Perhaps this was inevitable. Though I do not completely share his view that the Holocaust is "Holy History," I do emphatically agree that the murdered demand respect. What is done with the data reveals much about the nature of society. For example, at Babi Yar, where the earth opened to receive the bodies of 30,000 Jews whom the Nazis had machine

13. Cited by Hans Jonas in, "Tenth Essay Heidegger and Theology" in Jonas' *The Phenomenon of Life* (New York: Harper and Row, 1966), p. 247. Jonas employs the report of Guido Schneeberger, *Nachlese zu Heidegger: Dokumente zu seinem Leben und Denken* (Bern, 1962).

14. Hans Jonas has written: "Neither then nor now did Heidegger's thought provide a norm by which to answer such calls (the call of being) — linguistically or otherwise." "The devil," concludes Jonas, "is also part of the voice of being" (*The Phenomenon of Life*, p. 247).

15. Littell's study, *The Crucifixion of the Jews* (New York, Evanston, San Francisco, London: Harper & Row, 1975) contains one of the most lucid and perceptive analyses of university shortcomings. See, especially, Chapters I, "The Language of Events," and IV, "The Meaning of the Holocaust." See also Littell's chapter, "Church Struggle and the Holocaust," especially pp. 19–26, and "The Treason of the Intellectuals" in Littell and Hubert G. Locke, eds., *The German Church Struggle and the Holocaust* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1974).

gunned to death, the Soviets have put a plaque commemorating not the Jews, but the "victims of fascism."

Distortion of the Holocaust occurs with the very use of that term to describe what happened to Europe's Jews. Derived from the Greek *hōlōkautōma*, "burnt offering," Holocaust came into use sometime in the late 1950s. This antiseptic word implies a Christian understanding of Jewish history. Six million sacrifices to God Almighty; no grosser falsification of Isaiah was ever proposed. Judaism, for its part, speaks of the trauma differently and in its own idiom. *Hurban* (day of awe) is a Yiddish word which carries with it memories of the destruction(s) of the Jerusalem Temple. *Shoah* is Hebrew. It means desolation of cosmic proportion. Theologically, the Holocaust remains a mystery. Wiesel has written that "perhaps some day someone will explain how, on the level of man, Auschwitz was possible; but on the level of God, it will forever remain the most disturbing of mysteries."¹⁶

Two pedagogical goals are the elimination of ignorance and a striving for clarity of understanding. The Holocaust, an irrational act implemented in a highly rational bureaucratic manner, challenges at least the second goal. This is not to invalidate further research nor does it denigrate the enormous quantity of post-World War II documents which are coming to light. In fact, scholars continually penetrate ever deeper into the *how* of mass murder, including the reactions of victim and victimizer, but the *why* remains elusive. It is for this reason, I suggest, that Wiesel contends that "... the Holocaust teaches nothing." But there is much to learn from it. The Holocaust is a looking glass which reflects civilization and ourselves, simultaneously revealing and unraveling the fabric of our civilization. Post-Holocaust requires us, at the very least, seriously to question any *a priori* comparison of Holocaust to other tragedies. On the other hand, while scrupulously particular in nature (ridding the world of Jews), the Holocaust does have universal implications, especially for the survival of civilization itself. Rabbi Irving Greenberg analogizes the Holocaust to an early warning system, the treatment of Jews serving as a harbinger.

The Holocaust was an advance warning of the demonic potential in the very power and magnetism of modern culture. If one could conceive of Hitler's coming to power not in 1933 but in 1963, after the invention of nuclear and hydrogen bombs, then the Holocaust would have been truly universal. It is a kind of last warning that if humanity will perceive and overcome the demonism unleashed in modern culture, the world may survive. Otherwise, the next Holocaust will embrace the whole world.¹⁷

16. Elie Wiesel, *Legends of Our Time* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1968), p. 6. Arthur A. Cohen suggests that the Holocaust be viewed as Tremendum, a caesura in Jewish history. See his lucid, provocative and richly suggestive book, *The Tremendum* (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1981).

17. Irving Greenberg, "Judaism and Christianity After the Holocaust" in *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, Volume 12, Number 4 (Fall 1975): 542-543.

Uniqueness: Particularity and Universalism

Academics have a penchant for classifying which tends to obscure rather than illumine issues, seeking always that which is most general while stumbling over the unique. How, then, will they teach the Holocaust? Does one quantify an abyss? Language itself is a victim of the disaster. In teaching and learning about the Holocaust one needs to steer a course between the Scylla of mystification and the Charybdis of business as usual. Yehuda Bauer argues persuasively against mystification, noting a two-fold danger:

If what happened to the Jews was unique, then it took place outside of history, and it becomes a mysterious event, an upside-down miracle, so to speak, an event of religious significance in the sense that it is not man-made as that term is normally understood.¹⁸

This is mystification. On the other hand, Bauer warns of the historical and moral failure, or refusal, to confront the Holocaust. For example, Holocaust must be distinguished from genocide. Although there is no difference for the victims, more than semantics is at stake here. Genocide means ruthless, "even murderous, denationalization." Holocaust is systematic and total destruction: complete eradication from the face of the earth. Jews were the only group so designated for this fate.¹⁹ Failure to realize the uniqueness of the Jewish situation is obscuring history.

The attempt to subsume the Holocaust as one example of man's inhumanity to man, thereby making it comparable to Hiroshima, Wounded Knee, Mai Lai, Cambodia, among others, is at best a misreading of history which generalizes human suffering and easily lends itself to distortion. Academics would render more service to genuine objectivity if they recalled Wiesel's admonition: "Every tragedy deserves its own name." However, neither false universalization nor bad faith can sidestep what the Nazis themselves called the *Endlösung*. Elimination of Jews was viewed by Hitler and his devotees in eschatological terms. The question for professors is how to avoid the pitfalls of singularity and mystification, both of which place the Holocaust beyond the realm of human responsibility.

Contemporary Pseudo-Objectivity and the Holocaust

Two examples of pseudo-objectivity — one personal and the other organizational — have surfaced recently in association with so-called

18. Yehuda Bauer, *The Holocaust in Historical Perspective* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1978), p. 31.

19. Bauer notes that while certain Gypsy tribes were murdered, others were protected. Moreover, many individual Gypsies served in the German Army. Turning to the Turkish massacre of Armenian citizens in World War I, Bauer observes that, while half the Armenian population in Anatolia was murdered, the Armenians at Istanbul, the heart of the Ottoman Empire, were not killed (*Op. cit.*, p. 36).

revisionist history and the Holocaust.²⁰ Noam Chomsky, pioneer in meta-linguistics, influential academic, and selective defender of human rights, recently signed an appeal defending the civil rights of Robert Faurisson, a former professor of French Literature in Lyon. Faurisson has made a career out of “debunking” the Holocaust. Lecturing and publishing on two continents, he denies the reality of the gas chambers, charging that the Holocaust is a lie of Zionist doing. Anne Frank, argues Faurisson, was a fake. Yet Chomsky, in a letter to Professor Dawidowicz, expressed complete agnosticism on the validity of Faurisson’s views, claiming that he (Chomsky) was insufficiently involved in the issue to evaluate or pursue it.²¹

The organization of American Historians (OAH) received protests from some members over the sale of the OAH mailing list to the neo-Nazi *Journal of Historical Review*; other members defended the sale, citing academic objectivity. To resolve the issue, well-qualified historians were to analyze the JHR concerning its use of evidence and its contributors’ credentials. Then the OAH’s Executive Board would report to the membership. Dawidowicz asks the key question.

Report what, is not quite clear. Perhaps that the Neo-Nazis did not have proper academic credentials, or that they failed to use primary sources? Again one wonders: Would the OAH have reacted the same way to a pseudoscholarly journal pushing KKK propaganda?²²

It is tempting to dismiss these reports as merely exempla of endemic anti-Semitism. There have always been, and there always will be, anti-Semites. Self-hating Jews are, likewise and unfortunately, an all too frequent part of the post-Enlightenment landscape. Moreover, the existence of evil is hardly news. But there is, I think, more to the matter. Does academia itself not only encourage but institutionalize attitudes of indifference? Students are urged to eliminate or suspend (“bracket”) their own feelings and opinions when researching and writing papers. Those who most completely remove their attitudes, feelings, and values from their work receive A’s. Universities reward indifference and neutrality in areas where an expression of concern would make students more fully human. Consequently, university training frequently leads to moral numbness and the dulling of personal responsibility. Accurate reporting (true objectivity) has, in our time, become confused with ethical objectivity.

20. Professor Lucy S. Dawidowicz reports the sordid affair in her article “Lies About the Holocaust” (*Commentary*, December, 1980). The article should be required reading for all those interested in the correct usage of academic objectivity. Dawidowicz analyzes the bizarre career of *The Journal of Historical Review* (JHR) which is attempting to kill the Jews a second time. Nazis physically eradicated Jews; revisionist historians wish to deny their memory. Academics are in the forefront of this ghoulish assault. For example, Arthur R. Butz, Professor of Engineering at Northwestern University and author of *The Hoax of the Twentieth Century*, in which he reveals the “Holocaust legend,” is a leading contributor.

21. Dawidowicz, *Op. cit.*, p. 35.

22. *Ibid.*, p. 37.

The Task Before Us – Types of Instruction

Western education is at a pedagogical as well as a financial crossroad. The ancient Greek struggle between spiritual learning and technological skills is today, post-Holocaust, more intense even if less articulated. Our technological society is devoted to models and prototypes in areas outside of academia; why not within? Ananda Coomaraswamy remarks, somewhere, on the difference between Eastern and Western models of teaching. Eastern education requires a harmony between the thinker and his mode of living. Westerners deem sufficient the production of an internally coherent worldview, disregarding or downgrading the manner in which one's life is lead. My own view is that this is a contributing factor to the emergence in the East of the master-disciple relationship with its emphasis upon instructor as personal ideal and disciples as "representatives of humanity." For example, Gandhi's way was unexceptional — in terms of method — whereas Martin Luther King, Jr. seemed so exotic to us. Master-disciple also is a specifically religious mode of instruction, requiring a cosmic orientation and self-understanding. Knowledge and being are inextricably linked.

On the other hand, we in the West have adopted the teacher-student model. The teacher's skill or knowledge exercises prestige. He is irreplaceable only if, in Joachim Wach's words, "It is merely that none can actually be found to take his place." The teacher's life is irrelevant to, and may actually compete with, the skills that he wishes to communicate. Contemporary universities are built upon the teacher-student model. The danger is that frequently we confuse the two models, mistaking an accumulation of knowledge for a foretaste of salvation. Knowledge need not be wisdom. Educational schizophrenia can result in civilizational disaster.

Values are learned. While German professors were upholding the Führer — and maintaining their jobs — Dr. Janusz Korczak, educator and physician, chose to accompany the orphans in his care to the gas chambers. Social scientists and psychologists may speculate on differences in behavior. But one thing is certain: when personal obligation and human compassion are sacrificed for utilitarian goals and job enhancement, society is in peril. Ideally, the Holocaust is a course in civic responsibility and personal virtue. Therefore, teaching such a course involves not only history, but equally important, its stress upon current events.

Conclusion

One seeks in vain a clear societal signal. Reduced financial support of arts, education, and the humanities are pervasive, ranging from drastic curtailment of federal funding to the elimination of courses in art and music at the secondary level. In universities, skills and vocational courses attract students but minimize ethical concerns. A journalism major re-

ports that her news writings course spent one day — the last session of the semester — on the ethical aspects of reporting. Class responses to the query, “What would you do if the subject of your story threatened suicide upon the story’s publication?” were mixed. There was greater clarity in response to the question, “What if the publication of your story would lead to its subject’s dismissal?” All class members said they would refrain from publishing. On the other hand, there are more Holocaust courses, seminars, and institutes than at any time since 1945. Jewish-Christian interchange is also a topic of great interest and scholarly concern. The answer to the question: Where is our society headed? is unclear. Numbers alone reveal little. The Holocaust shows the ease with which people may be desensitized to critical moral and ethical concerns.²³ Awareness of the blunting of aesthetic sensibilities is not high on the national agenda.

If teaching and learning are once again to become humanizing experiences, then professors must reconceive their goals and how to achieve them without doing irreparable violence to personal virtue and human responsibility. Students, for their part, must not be content merely to train for a vocation but should prepare themselves to ennoble their chosen field. What constitutes the ethical life? Old definitions pale before the enormity of Auschwitz. Recall the Nazi practice of giving three yellow work permits (which entitled the bearer to live an extra day) to a married father of four children, telling him to distribute those permits.

Honesty compels the admission that after Auschwitz the world is not the same. The task of renewal is urgent and the state of the world is unredeemed. Professional competence is necessary, but so is the realization that being human requires its own full measure of competence. Professors and students could benefit in their soul-searching from the advice given in *Pirkei Avot*: “Be deliberate in judging (thoroughly study an issue from all angles), raise up disciples (teach and be what you know), and make a hedge for the Torah” (protect the divine from assault, making higher values accessible for contemplation).

23. Bauer, *Op. cit.*, specifically warns against the danger of moral anaesthesia when writing a “seminar paper about murder” (pp. 43, 44 and 47).

Reading the Holocaust

Review-Essay by DAVID R. MESHER

A Double Dying: Reflections on Holocaust Literature. by ALVIN H. ROSENFELD. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980. 210 pp.

The Resonance of Dust: Essays on Holocaust Literature and Jewish Fate. By EDWARD ALEXANDER. Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1979. xx + 256 pp.

By Words Alone: The Holocaust in Literature. By SIDRA DEKOVEN EZRAHI. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980. xiii + 262 pp.

Versions of Survival: The Holocaust and the Human Spirit. By LAWRENCE L. LANGER. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1982. xii + 267 pp.

THE FIRST MIRACLE OF HOLOCAUST LITERATURE is that much of it exists at all. Diaries and contemporary accounts were usually written under nearly impossible conditions, often without paper or pen, heat or light, and with the penalty of discovery certain death. That death eventually found many of the chroniclers of the ghettos and death camps, yet their manuscripts miraculously survived: those of Chaim Kaplan, Emmanuel Ringelblum, Anne Frank, Moshe Flinker, Janusz Korczak and others. An even larger store of documentation, in the form of memoirs, is filled with the miracle of each author's personal survival — not only in body but in soul, for both would be required to recreate in language one's individual experience of the destruction of European Jewry. Yet the compulsion to bear witness was, and is, so strong among its victims that the Holocaust has become one of the most documented events in human history.

The extent of that documentation has had a number of effects. Together with the passing of years, it has made the Holocaust seem readily accessible to the uninstructed public. The basic facts are now so well known as to have become divorced from their own reality, and works that have captured the most attention, such as Anne Frank's *Diary of a Young Girl*, are often as misleading in their content as they are moving in their pathos. For some time now, the public's demand for superficial understanding of what is beyond everyday comprehension has increased the tendency for popular exploitation of the Holocaust. All of this has

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prompted a number of reasoned surveys of Holocaust literature, among them the four recent studies under review here. Each of these combines almost contradictory motives: presenting a comprehensive, critical approach to the works and trends in Holocaust writings, and yet assuring that, within the critical apparatus, a sense of both respect and horror will operate at all times to preserve the dignity of the victims, if not the literature itself. Otherwise, we would only be exchanging the popularization of the Holocaust for a wave of academic exploitation.

The title of Alvin Rosenfeld's *A Double Dying* refers to a statement by Elie Wiesel that "at Auschwitz, not only man died, but also the idea of man." That "idea" is the conception of man in Western humanistic traditions — a myth shattered, ironically, by the Germans in the very act of proving their culture its supreme embodiment. Many have claimed, along with Wiesel, that "there is no such thing as a literature of the Holocaust, nor can there be." Rosenfeld begins by putting these two assertions in perspective: that, as the Holocaust shows the bankruptcy of Western culture, so does the literature which comes out of it explore the new directions possible for language, art, society, and humanity in a post-Holocaust world.

This radical alteration of form and content is evidenced by the inversion of metaphor in Holocaust literature. "For when fact itself surpasses fiction," argues Rosenfeld, "what is there left for the novel and short story to do?" The Nazis created a literal hell on earth; they built machines of destruction as previously envisaged only by gothic and surrealistic writers; they perverted reality through lies and deceptions. Holocaust literature is, therefore, by definition beyond the pale of Dante or Milton, Poe or Kafka, Huxley or Zamiatin, because their metaphors of invention have become the substance of its experience.

Because of that radical alteration, new guidelines are needed. Rosenfeld laments that

we lack a phenomenology of reading Holocaust literature, a series of maps that will guide us on our way as we pick up and variously try to comprehend the writings of the victims, the survivors, the survivors-who-became-victims, and the kinds-of-survivors, those who were never there but know more than the outlines of the place.

A Double Dying is a significant first step in articulating that phenomenology; in it, Rosenfeld covers as many authors as possible, to establish the broad base necessary for constructing criteria to evaluate, appreciate, and — in his last section, "Deceptions and Corruptions" — reject literature of the Holocaust.

The necessity of such rejection is as much the point of that section as is the rejection itself. After all, the common argument runs, these are not contemporary documents or even memoirs, but recent works of literary and cinematic invention, such as Peter Weiss's play *The Investigation*, novels by William Styron and Leslie Epstein, Lina Wertmüller's film *The*

Seven Beauties, and Sylvia Plath's poetry. Must creativity be limited by the realities of inhumanity? The question, in fact, reverses the old quandary of the humanist over how the Germans apparently proved that great art, in which their culture was so thoroughly steeped, has no humanizing or civilizing effect. Since art has no effects whatsoever, recent works seem to assert, why shouldn't it be allowed to degrade, exploit, and warp? As an example of this argument, Rosenfeld quotes Styron in *Sophie's Choice*, "that it is 'inexcusable to condemn any single *people* for *anything*, as he has one of his characters say, 'and that goes for *any people* . . . even the Germans!'" Though Rosenfeld's motives are commendable, his criteria for rejection are not always equally clear. He condemns Epstein's tragicomic novel, *King of the Jews*, for example, because it is "twice-derivative . . . taking its terms not only from the recorded history of the Holocaust but as well from much of the imaginative literature that has been written to represent aspects of this history." This seems an odd charge to make in a period when the "non-fiction novel" has made research as important as creativity, and in which the tracing and evaluating of sources in writers like Melville, Joyce, Nabokov, and Pynchon have become something of an academic industry.

Nearly as broadly based as *A Double Dying*, Edward Alexander's *The Resonance of Dust* nevertheless achieves his ends in its selectivity, not its scope. Anne Frank's diary, for example, receives scarcely any mention while that of Moshe Flinker, another young Dutch victim of the Nazis, is considered at length, not for the horror or accuracy of his account alone, but for its power and "conviction that the rebirth of Israel from the ashes of the Holocaust represents a divine scheme of redemption."

Indeed, divided into its components, this conviction reveals the two paradoxical responses of victims and survivors of the Holocaust that Alexander contends are most authentic: the rebirth of Jewish nationalism and of personal faith. Besides Flinker's diary, Alexander treats Zionism in the poetry of Abba Kovner and Nelly Sachs. In a later chapter, "The Holocaust and the God of Israel," the author finds renewal of personal faith in such works as Chaim Kaplan's *Warsaw Diary*, the poetry of Jacob Glatstein and Aaron Zeitlin, and the fiction of André Schwarz-Bart and Piotr Rawicz.

Like the other studies considered here, *The Resonance of Dust* also discusses the "secondary responses" of writers not personally involved in the Holocaust, though Alexander limits his considerations to the two major surviving Jewish literatures, Israeli and American-Jewish. And, though he finds ambiguities in the Israeli response to the war against the Jews, Alexander saves his most scathing judgments for the writings of his fellow Americans.

Until the Second World War, Zionism was largely isolated within world Jewry and, as a reaction, its proponents and practitioners adopted a self-reliant, often superior attitude toward the Jews still in exile. The

Holocaust, according to Alexander, “offered grim confirmation of only one ideology: Zionism.” But Israelis have been prone to avoid the lessons of the Holocaust by continuing the distinctions, developed in isolation, between themselves and their Diaspora brethren. Such attitudes are presented ironically, as Alexander notes, in Haim Hazaz’s story, “The Sermon,” where the protagonist at first rejects the inheritance and burden of suffering that constitute Jewish history, and then attacks the Zionist posture which intentionally separates itself from that history. The same theme is repeated elsewhere, and not always ironically, in works by Israeli writers like Amichai, Bartov, Gouri, Ben-Amotz, and Kaniuk; the Holocaust serves both to confirm the darkest fears of Zionists and yet to challenge their most ingrained self-conceptions.

By contrast, Jewish writers in America reacted quite differently in the aftermath of the Holocaust. According to Alexander, they not only failed to lead other American Jews to understanding through self-criticism, but they persisted in precisely the same errors which had characterized European Jewry since the Enlightenment and accounted, at least in part, for the mental paralysis of the Nazis’ victims. Those errors are briefly summarized by the author as a “love of leftist humanitarianism,” a subject sufficiently divorced from the Holocaust that it might seem out of place, were it not for the consistency and fervor with which Alexander attacks such sentiments throughout his book. Special chapters are devoted to the fiction of Saul Bellow and I.B. Singer, in no small part, I suspect, because both novelists reject the left-wing ideals that have so long attracted Jewish intellectuals.

This political bias forms the most controversial aspect of the study; so much so that Alexander refuses to name it in the first chapter, admitting only that it is “too polemical to be stated explicitly at the outset of a scholarly essay.” This bias forms the heart of Alexander’s approach, but it is masterfully controlled so that it never appears to interfere with his ability to make sound critical judgments. More than the other volumes being considered, Alexander’s study goes beyond literary criticism to present a challenging, often incisive view of contemporary Jewish culture as a whole.

Less comprehensive than Rosenfeld and less polemical than Alexander, Sidra Ezrahi nonetheless provides a good introduction to the forms of Holocaust literature. The emphasis on the literal in her title, *By Words Alone*, expresses her concern, shared by Rosenfeld and Langer, with the very nature of language after the Holocaust, as well as with its usages in literature. More than either Rosenfeld or Alexander, however, Ezrahi concentrates on what the first has called “post-Holocaust literature” — works written after the war by survivors and others.

Her approach is an attempt at categorizing literature of the Holocaust primarily by content and genre, with some attention paid to the writer’s personal experience or lack of it. Though Ezrahi no doubt in-

tended hers to be a purely literary study, such an approach inevitably raises questions about the use of imaginative literature for sociological and historical documentation. The result is perhaps the most systematic guide to post-war Holocaust writing, but a formulistic guide that is also lacking in the phenomenological assumptions which Rosenfeld and Langer labor to establish.

The reasons behind this, and behind some of what the other authors are doing as well, are hinted at in Alfred Kazin's Foreword to *By Words Alone*, where he argues that "Ezrahi makes us see the Holocaust itself as inevitably more real, urgent, terrible, than the writing that came out of it." This takes us back to the contradictory motives implicit in all of the studies that I mentioned at the beginning, and offers a fine example of how that contradiction can exacerbate an already formidable task. In protecting the Holocaust from the literature written about it, Ezrahi is willing only to explore historical accuracy and sociological or psychological evocation, but no independent insights or aesthetic performance. An excellent introduction for students of the Holocaust to the archetypes of its literature, *By Words Alone* has a more limited value for students of literature interested in learning about the Holocaust and its writings.

Ezrahi's best work is, thus, concentrated in those sections of appreciative treatment, especially of "the literary forms which are built up on the perception of the Holocaust as a confluence of personal and collective destiny" in which the writer or hero "may have been sustained by the sense that this struggle was part of a process larger than himself." Fortunately, these sections are in the majority. But Ezrahi also devotes a great deal of attention to admittedly second-rate works which offer nothing profound either as literature or as specifically Holocaust literature. For example, her analysis of the works of I.B. Singer, Paul Celan, and Jacob Glatstein is given no more space than the discussion of novels by Louis Falstein, Irving Shaw, William Hoffman, and Stefan Heym, to mention only a few indisputably minor writers.

Lawrence Langer's *Versions of the Holocaust* differs in a number of essentials from the first three studies considered. For one, it is not intended as an introduction to Holocaust literature. Langer, an established authority in the field, is here building on groundwork that he has already laid in *The Holocaust and the Literary Imagination* (1975), and *The Age of Atrocity: Death in Modern Literature* (1978). And that qualitative difference allows for a quantitative one: rather than surveying a large number of writers or giving lengthy summaries of unfamiliar works, Langer is able to concentrate on an exhaustive analysis of a few, significant ones. After establishing his thesis, for example, he spends the entire second half of his book on three writers — Elie Wiesel, Gertrud Kolmar, and Nelly Sachs.

Langer's thesis is also more complex than is manageable in a more introductory work. The "versions of survival" in the title refer, first of all, to versions of suffering: the Holocaust was different not only in different

ghettos, shtetls, and camps, but at different times in the same camp, and at the same time in different sections of the same camp. As Langer quotes Benedict Kautsky, a survivor: "Even when you're talking about the same period of time, prisoners in the same camp lived as if on different planets, depending on the work they had to do." But this does not begin to explain the differences in accounts of the Holocaust. Langer recognizes, in addition, that

every survivor memoir must be read, at least partially, as a work of the imagination, which selects some details and blocks out others for the purpose of shaping the reader's response — indeed, for the purpose of organizing the author's own response, too.

This is the difference between an event and its reconstruction which Langer, borrowing from Charlotte Delbo, terms the "true" and the "veracious." But even this distinction is not the end, for the very words used to convey those memoirs, as we have seen with Rosenfeld and Ezrahi, are insufficient. "Vocabulary mocks the event, while the event mocks our vocabulary," Langer declares — all within the first few pages of his book.

But as these much-qualified "versions of survival" multiply, Langer keeps the reality of survival firmly before us: in a death camp, one survived largely by chance, and then only because another died in his place. And whatever he did or did not do, think or did not think, a death-camp inmate was powerless to change his environment or his own relation to it. This is what Langer calls the "choiceless choice" — a situation in which conventional human morality and psychology did not apply and which, as a result, now undermines those systems.

To establish the burden of the "choiceless choice," Langer considers at length accounts of the Holocaust by Viktor Frankl and Bruno Bettelheim; both of these have been long repudiated by scholars of the Holocaust, and yet have continued to exercise immense influence on popular perceptions and in psychology. In dealing with the dangerous distortions of Frankl and Bettelheim, Langer exposes not only the inadequacies of their accounts, but the bankruptcy of the analytic theories which have evolved from them. Though this first half of Langer's study is always persuasive and often brilliant, at least in its main points, there are occasional shortcomings. Take his comparison of Gandhi's position on the Jews in Germany in 1938 with Frankl's memoir from 1947. Like Bettelheim, Frankl developed a theory, based on the tenet of traditional humanism, that adverse conditions offer the individual a chance for his own moral improvement. Gandhi, in a famous statement, seems to agree that "suffering voluntarily undergone" will bring the Jews "an inner strength and joy." Langer rejects both positions, arguing that ascribing spiritual "benefits" to a situation created expressly for wholesale physical destruction is perverse. This is true for Frankl, but not necessarily for Gandhi. The psychiatrist's spirit is the psyche, which depends upon physical survival of the individual; the Mahatma's spirit is the soul, which does

not. Elsewhere, Langer denies George Steiner's comparison of the death camp and "the images and chronicles of Hell in European art and thought from the twelfth to the eighteenth centuries," but later he terms the Holocaust "a universe afflicted by a rough equivalent of Swedenborg's devils" — surely a corollary to that Hell.

If Frankl and Bettelheim are (deservedly) the villains of Langer's study, Elie Wiesel serves as an example of a survivor who has struggled both to describe the Holocaust and to begin the recovery from it. Langer's striking insights of the first chapters are necessarily diluted here: Wiesel's work, according to Langer, who highlights the contradictions that other critics try to ignore, contains many "versions of survival" and therefore multiplicity, not uniformity, is its achievement.

Wiesel was perhaps an obvious choice for the exposition of Langer's thesis. Gertrud Kolmar and Nelly Sachs are quite surprising. Neither wrote as a survivor *per se*: Kolmar was never heard from after her deportation to Auschwitz, though the trials of a Jew living in Berlin as late as 1943 are expressed in some of her poems and in letters to her sister; Nelly Sachs narrowly avoided her own deportation by escaping to Sweden in 1940. There is a troubling side to their joint consideration in Langer's final chapter, as if he were trying to make a composite personality to fit his theory. Langer is correct in rejecting the view that Kolmar "would have accepted her 'ultimate destruction' (for which we read gassing and cremation) 'with perfect equanimity,'" but his attempt to use her as an example of moral romanticism faced by the "choiceless choice" of the camps is equally specious, since the details of her death are unknown. And, partly in order to fit Sachs into the category of survivor, Langer allows her just the kind of romantic (if to some extent psychologically accurate) explanation of survival which he excoriates elsewhere: "If I had not been able to write, I would not have survived." Still, Langer is an especially perceptive critic, and his reading of Kolmar in particular, whose recognition is long overdue in America, is very welcome.

A final note: writing last year in *Commentary*, Robert Alter decries what he titled "Deformations of the Holocaust," including three of the volumes under review here. "In a dozen different ways," Alter laments, "we falsify our lives as Jews by setting them so dramatically in the shadow of the crematoria." And he is partly right: one need only view the range of popular and pseudo-scholarly exploitations of the Holocaust that have come into being in the last decade to feel a deep uneasiness. But setting our lives elsewhere will hardly diminish the darkness of the shadow or erase the existence of the crematoria. Only an informed and aware public can restrain those excesses, and surely this is at least one function of such studies as we are considering.

Yet Alter also begrudges the appearance of Holocaust Studies as a separate academic discipline: "We do not have, and certainly should not have, academic majors in World War II or in slavery, and the same should

be true for the Holocaust, which needs to be studied in the larger disciplinary perspective of modern European history and Jewish history." In stating the obvious, Alter ignores the significant — that most of the conventional disciplines of the humanities and social sciences, from language, literature, and ethics, to psychology, criminology, and political science, now must be studied in the larger perspective of the Holocaust. They must be, and yet they are not; the world is willing to forget or distort the destruction of European Jewry, and many academics are desperate to preserve the outward validity of cherished pre-Holocaust values. If the Holocaust does not profoundly affect our reading of any subject — say, the fiction of Stendahl — no matter how apparently distinct from it, then it is that subject which requires no further study. This is at the root of the phenomenology and the polemics toward which Rosenfeld, Alexander, Ezrahi, and Langer all make important contributions.

Faith and the Holocaust

Review-Essay by BENNY KRAUT

With God in Hell. By ELIEZER BERKOVITS. New York. Sanhedrin Press, 1979. 166 pp. \$7.95.

The Faith and Doubt of Holocaust Survivors. By REEVE BRENNER. New York. The Free Press, 1980. 266 pp. \$12.95.

THE PROLIFERATION OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE publications on the Holocaust in recent years has, by and large, expressed itself in works of literature, survivor accounts, narrative history and theological reflection. Relatively little attention, however, has been given to an analysis of the religious faith of Jews who experienced the catastrophe and to the impact which it had on their faith. *With God In Hell* by Eliezer Berkovits and *The Faith and Doubt of Holocaust Survivors* by Reeve Robert Brenner are, therefore, welcome contributions to a vital, though much neglected, area of Jewish concern.

With God in Hell intends a searching exploration into the meaning of Jewish faith and an illumination of its quintessential qualities. Berkovits feels that post-Holocaust theological formulations which challenge the nature of God (how could God have remained silent and permitted such atrocities?) and question the possibility of human faith (can faith in God after Auschwitz be tenable?), while clearly valid and compelling, forget to deal with the more fundamental issue inherent in these questions: what is "the essence of faith within the system of Judaism." Convinced, however, that the answer to their question can be gained only through "empathetic contact" with the faith of Jews who experienced the Holocaust, Berkovits explores the theological issue against the backdrop of their religious tenacity.

The first three chapters pay glowing tribute to the astounding religious steadfastness and extraordinary spiritual heroism of those he calls "authentic Jews." Berkovits recounts heart-rending yet stirring tales, culled from previously published literature in Hebrew and English, of religious Jews smuggling *tefillin* and *siddurim* into the concentration camps, forming prayer and study groups under the noses of the SS, and celebrating in various ways the Sabbath and festivals. Even the lack of food and the omnipresence of hunger — major contributory causes to the dehumanization of camp inmates — were not able to break their defiant resolve to live by the dictates and discipline of *halakhah* (ch. 2). At great

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peril to their lives, for example, Jews overcame their physical cravings and stored their meagre rations of bread until it could be used to fulfill the *mizvah* of *mishloah-manot* on Purim; some refrained from eating their ration of bread on the first night of Pesah, and some, incredibly, refrained from eating bread during all of Pesah. Moreover, authentic Jews sought out the legal directives and implicit ethical values of the *halakhah* by asking rabbinic authorities for guidance in often terrifying situations (ch. 3). Was it permissible for a father to bribe a guard in order to save his only son from a death-camp selection, knowing full well that another Jewish youth would therefore be selected to replace him? Was it permissible for a Jewish ghetto to hand over to the Germans 40,000 Jews for “resettlement” if the remainder of the Jewish population was promised to be spared from any further “evacuation”? Should one say *birkhat ha-gomel* after having been saved from a selection? May one eat non-kosher food in cases where death is not immediately likely?

Even *in extremis* many religious Jews consciously chose to maintain traditional patterns. In making this choice, however, they were not oblivious to their stark reality as Bruno Bettelheim (a favored whipping boy for Berkovits in this book) and others have charged, but, on the contrary, they responded to their reality by invoking modes of responses emanating from, and consistent with, their religious value system. By affirming God and His Torah despite the enormous opposition of the hostile environment, authentic Jews showed a “contemptuous indifference” to the enemy’s control of their bodies and upheld the integrity of Judaism, and hence, their own spiritual integrity. They preserved for themselves the luminous feeling of having been endowed with the Divine Image, *Zelem Elohim* (p. 33), and were free in a most important moral sense: they did not have to struggle, as did non-authentic Jews, to affirm meaning to their existence. Not questioning the transcendent value system to which they were devoted, authentic Jews lived as fully autonomous individuals, authentic to themselves and their beliefs. Their lives therefore reflected a basic moral imperative, crystallized by Berkovits as follows: “To be unconcerned with what others may do to you, even when your life is at stake, because you are committed to the truth of your own life, is the supreme act of personal autonomy” (p. 74).

Though on the surface seeming to hasten death or, at least, increase the chances of an early death, the various forms of spiritually motivated behavior not only fostered spiritual life but actually often helped to sustain physical life. Religious concerns energized Jews psychologically to overcome physical deprivations, thus reducing the scope of their physical dependence on the oppressors. This in turn retarded, diminished or even totally prevented the process of demoralization, infantilization, and animalization from taking effect. For this reason, Berkovits argues, authentic Jews suffered less from possible disintegration of their humanity than did non-authentic, that is, assimilated, Jews.

The last third of the book mixes biting polemics against Western Civilization (which do surface occasionally in earlier sections of the book as well) with the attempt to arrive at a definition of Jewish faith. It is noteworthy that the author interweaves these discussions, almost as if the proper definition of Jewish faith and the glorification of its spiritual values could best be achieved only by contrast with the thoroughly disreputable alternatives of Western Civilization. But his approach is understandable. In a, by now, familiar refrain, Berkovits debunks the values of a "morally bankrupt" Western Civilization and also contemns the non-authentic assimilationist Jews (Bettelheim is cast as their prototype) who accepted these values as their own. And since, for him, Judaism and Western Civilization are so fundamentally at odds with one another in their basic orientations to life, it is not surprising that Nazism — one manifestation of this spiritually bankrupt Western Civilization — should have waged war against the Jews. The war itself represented a "spiritual" battle to the death in which the mighty forces of the spirit of nihilism spawned by Western Civilization were arrayed against the physically powerless Jewish spirit of restraint and morality (ch. 6).

Berkovits relentlessly pursues the depiction of the antithetical values of authentic Judaism and Western Civilization. Thus, for example, he asserts that the authentic Jew repudiates the Western ideal of survival at any cost. Furthermore, Western concepts of honor, dignity and chivalry — articulated in western society through militarism, vengeance and violence — stand as polar opposites to the ideals of Judaism. If Ajax is the prototype of the Western hero, if cowardice is defined by not fighting, then Judaism must reject these values and the culture from which they emerge. Judaism, Berkovits avers, rejects the sword and lives by the prophetic refrain of Zechariah (4:6): "Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit says the Lord of Hosts."

Then, too, in the face of catastrophe, authentic Judaism holds as its ideal *Kiddush haShem*. Unlike the model of the tragic hero in Western literary tradition, who "denigrates life for the sake of an abstract ideal," who must die to escape physical reality for the sake of a greater truth and whose act of death is glorified, the Jewish model of martyrdom represents neither an escape from life nor a glorification of death (ch. 7). Rather, the act of *Kiddush haShem* sanctifies *life*; it signifies the retention of, not the flight from, one's cherished pattern of meaningful existence until the very last moment. It is not the moment of death which is heroic, but the way one lives before that moment. Hence, numerous Jews, individually and collectively, could walk serenely and in quiet dignity to the gas chambers with prayers on their lips, giving heroic testimony to their undying faith.

Western Civilization and Judaism differ radically even over the essential definition of faith. In his elaboration of this theme, Berkovits reaches the theological climax of the book. What is Jewish faith, and how does it differ from the Western understanding of religious faith? After a

brief etymological excursus analysing the Biblical use of the Hebrew word *emunah*, he concludes that it does not refer to the subjective belief in something or someone for which there is no evidence, but, rather, *emunah* means faithfulness, trust. The ultimate paradigm for this faith as trust is exemplified in Abraham's obedience to God's request at the *Akedah*. Abraham experienced a profound existential crisis: God's covenantal promise that Isaac would inherit him seemed to be contradicted by the new Divine request. Despite this apparent contradiction, Abraham still evinced faith (*emunah*) in God, he was still faithful, he still trusted in Him, in His promises, and in the continuation of the covenant. How different is this Jewish understanding of religious faith from Western ideas! Berkovits counterposes his interpretation of the *Akedah* with that of Søren Kierkegaard whose conclusions about the faith of Abraham are taken to be representative of Western and Christian notions of faith. To Kierkegaard, the problem was fundamentally logical: how to reconcile the contradiction between the covenantal promise and the present request to sacrifice Isaac? Logically, Abraham could not; he therefore renounced the world of logic, and took comfort in God with a "leap of faith" that was a "leap into the absurd." Of this leap, Berkovits suggests that "coming from the Western and Christian tradition, he [Kierkegaard] was probably ill-equipped to understand Abraham" (p. 123). The quintessential nature of Abraham's faith — the faith of authentic Jews — is characterized by trust, by faithfulness to God, not by an absurd leap into the world of illogic.

The faith of authentic Jews in the camps and the ghettos was the faith of Abraham. Like him, they had trust that the covenant between God and Israel continues, that despite the overwhelming atrocities, degradation, and humiliation, a Jew could still pray, don *tefillin*, maintain his link with, and even praise the God of Israel. Their trust affirmed "the reality of the relationship. It is the faith of the covenant in action." Berkovits is quick to point out that this faith was not an unquestioning one; Jews did question and doubt — but only because they affirmed their covenantal faith. And their abiding faithfulness to God made the heroes of Western Civilization shabby by comparison.

This book is to be commended for a number of reasons. It portrays the Jewish faithful in action in a moving, insightful and revealing account. Berkovits writes with the energetic fervor of a man driven by a self-conscious mission: to preserve for the record and to bring into public view the rich inner spiritual life of the Jews and their extensive underground religious activity (see esp. pp. 49-52). While other such records have been published previously, this work — less technical than those of Rosenbaum and Zimmels — will be more accessible to the general reader whether Jewish or non-Jewish. It can also serve as a most valuable book for college students studying Religion, Theology and the Holocaust (as I've discovered in my own classroom).

Furthermore, Berkovits' discussion of the difference between Judaism and Western Civilization, albeit polemical and not new, nonetheless forces us to take cognizance of that issue. While the ideals of Judaism and Western Civilization may not be as radically distinct as he suggests, they are also not coequal. At the very least, the book serves to give us pause against merely adopting Western ideals and judging all Jewish behavior from within the framework of an often alien value system. Against this background, I found his characterization of *Kiddush haShem* to be particularly insightful, and his discussion of this concept alongside *Kiddush haHayyim* to be refreshing and suggestive.

Despite its merits, however, the book suffers from serious shortcomings. Perhaps because it is both a descriptive panegyric and a theologically analytic work, it seems peculiarly uneven; and whereas it succeeds on a descriptive level, on a more probing theological level it is less satisfying.

For all of Berkovits' discussion of the faith of authentic Jews during the Holocaust, a number of basic understandings of that faith consistently elude us. He limns the religious actions of the faithful and then, as a theologian, interprets their faith experience. But what did the *authentic Jews* mean by faith? Did *they* interpret faith (*emunah*) as *trust*, as he does? Notwithstanding the few autobiographical statements of religious Jews which he cites to demonstrate their agreement with his own definition, the truth is that in penetrating the faith experience of religious Jews he does so through the prism of his *own* definitions of faith. This problem of focus, therefore, pervades the book: Did these religious Jews interpret the confrontation between Jews and Nazis as a spiritual conflict, as he does? (ch. 6). So many had neither the time, energy, and ability to think about the issue.

In addition, how did the faithful really keep their faith? Defining faith as trust and imputing it to them is not an adequate answer. Since the faith of some (or many?) was shattered, how were the faithful able to affirm their trust in a covenantal God? Why did the transcendent ideals of Judaism sustain some authentic Jews and not others? Were the latter simply less authentic? What does this tell us about the experience of faith and the personalities of the faithful? Perhaps faith ought not to be characterized only as trust, and perhaps the qualities of human *stubbornness* and/or *loyalty* ought to be regarded as essential components of faith? Moreover, since the overwhelming majority of the stories of the faithful which Berkovits narrates deal with Hasidim, what conclusions ought we to reach — social, psychological and theological — about the source and strength of the religious resolve of Hasidim and the Hasidic communities.¹

1. Pesach Schindler, "The Holocaust and *Kiddush Hashem* in Hassidic Thought," *Tradition* (Spring-Summer, 1973).

Another untouched issue which would have shed light on the faith postures of religious Jews is: What is the true measure of religious faithfulness of authentic Jews — the continuation of ritual practice in pious unreflection or accompanied by a concomitant questioning of God? Who is the true religious hero?

In chapters 1-3, Berkovits portrays him as one who attempts ritual practices; in chapter 8, he patterns the hero after a protesting Job who contends with God. Had he integrated the two models in his book, we might have had some inkling about what he feels was the more compelling religious stance *vis à vis* God. For example, should the Jew who prayed inside the huge open pit of a camp where the bodies of murdered Jews were dumped be lauded for his spiritual grandeur (as Berkovits intends) or castigated for his insensitivity, his automaton-like continuation of religious life? (p. 5) Did he continue to pray as if nothing had happened and, if so, should he be likened to Job's friends who were ultimately rejected by God? Why did he not go mad? If, as Berkovits has suggested in *Faith After the Holocaust*, the contemporary Jew cannot go on living as if nothing has changed, do we see here a Jew praying in the pit during the Holocaust acting as if nothing has changed? The truth is we don't know what the Jew was praying. Perhaps he was, indeed, contending with God and protesting out of the anguish of a dialectical faith. But at this point Berkovits only extols the continuation of the ritual act of prayer. The question remains: What religious posture is truly praiseworthy? To be sure, one may justifiably argue that we dare not judge. Agreed — but if we wish to understand and evaluate the nature of the religious faith of Holocaust Jews as Berkovits seeks to do, ought we not to probe this faith in its various dimensions and draw attention to the inordinately difficult theological issues which emerge?

One final word on the issue of Jewish faith. In light of Berkovits' analysis of faith as trust (ch. 8), his claim that only by confronting the faith of authentic Jews during the Holocaust can one gain a significant understanding of Judaism must be seriously questioned. Berkovits arrived at his definition of Jewish faith as trust and faithfulness from Biblical exegesis and the use of a Biblical paradigm of faith. His definition, therefore, is entirely independent of post-Biblical historical circumstances. Acts of religious faithfulness during the Holocaust provide neither the definition nor the meaning of Jewish faith, but do illustrate, in the most poignant and extraordinary fashion, *emunah* in action. These acts of faith stand in a continuum of historical Jewish trust in God from Abraham down through modern and contemporary times.

Other failings of the book result from what I would label Berkovits' "method of discourse." Since he consciously writes from a triumphalist typological perspective, glorifying an idealized authentic Jew and authentic Judaism, he repeatedly draws conclusions in bold, exaggerated strokes which are not always convincing and sometimes quite misleading. His

idealized portraits, coupled with his strident polemical tone, sometimes gloss over historical facts and the subtle nuances of theological and philosophical concern.

While never quite explicit, the book nevertheless leaves the strong but faulty historical impression (confirmed by my students' classroom reactions) that only authentic Jews had the ability to live autonomously, that all authentic Jews remained autonomous, that authentic Jews did not have to struggle to retain self-respect. Berkovits is obviously aware that none of these conclusions is precisely true, but the style and tone of the panegyric help foster these perceptions. Certainly authentic Jews struggled to keep their faith and self-respect; certainly not all authentic Jews lived autonomously. After all, some (many?) lost either their faith and/or sense of humanity. Furthermore, inauthentic Jews in Berkovits' terms also lived autonomously and defined their own situations in accordance with ideals most meaningful to them, notwithstanding his repudiation of their values. Thus, Zionists and Jewish socialists who later fought the Nazis, indeed, any Jew who attempted to slow down the death process, who "organized" in the camps or ghettos should be characterized as autonomous. In the literature of survivor accounts, one thinks of Steinlauf washing with dirty water to keep up the "forms of civilization" (see Primo Levi, *Survival in Auschwitz*, pp. 34-35).

On a conceptual level, in fact, one may also question Berkovits' basic definition of living autonomously which he equates with the lack of struggle for self-respect. One may reasonably affirm the exact opposite: to struggle for one's identity in the face of adversity is the supreme act of personal autonomy. Hence, where there is no choice, there is no autonomy.

Other instances exist where one might have desired more measured generalizations rather than sweeping categorical brushstrokes in black-white terms. In almost every case, they result from extreme implications to which Berkovits is driven as a result of his typological differentiation between the ideals of authentic Judaism and those of Western Civilization and of assimilated Jews. Thus, while he pays his respects to Leo Baeck, he still intimates that all Western Civilization Jews were assimilationists and that all Eastern European Jews were authentic. Therefore, even the secular born, assimilated Janusz Korczak, because he was of Eastern European origin and his roots lay in "the historic tradition of Judaism" is deemed to be an authentic Jew. But was Korczak's morally inspired behavior in personally leading his Warsaw orphans to the gas chambers when he had the option to survive motivated by Berkovits's conceptions of authentic Judaism?

More significantly, one must query, is religious faith as trust exclusively a Jewish idea, and ought Kierkegaard's approach to be accepted as the paradigm for all Christianity? And if Kierkegaard's analysis of the *Akedah* is perceived to be "religious acrobatics," is it really correct to

conclude that “the authentic Jew does not engage in religious acrobatics?” (p. 123). On one level, is that not what Rabbinic Midrash does?

In contrasting the “survival at any cost” of Western Civilization with the ideal of “survival only without the loss of fundamental values” of authentic Judaism, Berkovits is led to conclude that, for all intents and purposes, rabbinic interpretation of the Bible over the centuries supported a pacifistic orientation with respect to the taking of violent or military action. While he acknowledges that, theoretically, there exists no absolute commitment to non-violence in Biblical and rabbinic Judaism, in practice, he suggests, the substance of the pacifist message has overshadowed its possible qualifications (pp. 139-146). But is not the attribution of the *ideal* of pacifism to the rabbis somewhat overstated? (p. 139). One again wonders to what extent Berkovits’s postulation of two antithetical spiritual ideals forced him to this conclusion. What of extensive rabbinic analyses of *milhemet mizvah* and *milhemet reshut*? What of rabbinic elaborations of the Biblical *mizvah* of killing someone who comes to kill you first before he kills you? What of rabbinic support for Bar Kochba? What of rabbis fighting the Crusaders, as recorded in medieval chronicles? While these may be historical exceptions, perhaps the predominant practical pacificism of the rabbis through time should not be interpreted as a *spiritual ideal* but rather as a *pragmatic orientation* born from centuries of social, political, and military powerlessness. On a Jewish national and communal level, the Biblical directive of “If one comes to kill you, anticipate and kill him first” until recent times had no sociopolitical outlet. Perhaps for this reason, the rabbis seemed to embrace the non-violent motifs of the Bible, though ample Biblical precedents support a tradition which extols “the art of war and martial courage” (p. 142).

Indeed, one may ask Berkovits: Would the rabbis agree with his norm, that the Jew ought to be totally unconcerned with the enemy? Can ignoring the enemy and retaining independence of religious action become a prescriptive ethical and religious norm *at all times*? Or is it perhaps applicable only on occasions when there is *no choice but death*? From indirect evidence, it appears that Berkovits is sensitive to the issue. He consciously does attempt to vindicate authentic Jews who ignored the enemy and tried to perform *mizvot* at the risk of their lives, thus violating the *halakhah* mandating that they preserve life and not expose themselves to danger (p. 95). But he does not come to grips with the critical conceptual principle involved.

Moreover, one may continue this line of questioning and ask: under what circumstances is it appropriate for an authentic Jew physically to resist the enemy, or is it never appropriate? Up until the last four pages of the book, one may justifiably have been led to conclude that Jewish physical defense is never appropriate. But, in these last four pages, Berkovits makes a startling *volte-face* which, on the surface, undercuts his entire argument and approach in the preceding pages.

At that point, the author asserts that the "Jewish people can no longer continue as before." Because of the enormity of the Holocaust and God's guiding the Jews back to Israel, Jews "need a critical review of the past Jewish attitude in the face of persecution." Jewish submission is no longer a viable option. Centuries of Jews — authentic Jews — have therefore been guilty of not having adequately learned the lesson of "kill an anticipated killer before he kills you." Berkovits now muses aloud that Jews should have resisted, if only to have refused to move from their homes into the ghettos. Authentic Jews were guilty; "We were insufficiently prepared to reconcile the Jewish teachings of anti-militarism and respect for all life with the resistance to evil demanded by the circumstances" (p. 156). Certainly from here on into the future, though Judaism's fate will ultimately be decided by the Divine Spirit and not by physical power, until that final period, "we must learn to resist."

No less than do Irving Greenberg or Emil Fackenheim, Berkovits rejects Jewish powerlessness. Whether he feels the need to develop an ethic of power as Greenberg argues, or repudiate the tenability of Jewish martyrdom as a contemporary model as Fackenheim suggests, is not apparent. One senses in the thought of these four pages the fecund seed of a new book which I, for one, hope will be written. Still, with regard to the present work, the question remains: how can we account for this apparent radical about-face?

Berkovits is caught on the horns of a dilemma, largely shaped by his extreme idealization of the value of pacifism which he finds inherent in rabbinic tradition. On the one hand, his book salutes the faithfulness of authentic Jews and their ideals of non-militarism and of ignoring the enemy. On the other hand, the Holocaust has taught the Jews the bitter lesson of what physical powerlessness and ignoring the enemy can mean; and he, for one, is totally committed to Jewish survival. What to do? He resolves this tension dialectically. The Jews have an obligation physically to resist evil directed against them, and this obligation rests on a *moral* foundation, not simply on a reflexive counter-response to insure physical survival. By couching his justification for Jewish physical defense in moral terms, Berkovits tries to deflect any accusation that he has borrowed Western ideals. He is not exchanging the "faith history" of Judaism for the "power history" of the Western world. Yet it is clear that, for him, this right to military defense, as morally legitimate as it is, does not reflect the highest values of Judaism; ultimately, he reaffirms the dominance of the ideal of relying on the Divine Spirit. Reliance on that Spirit, however, is suspended for the undefined future! Hence, in light of the moral reorientation that should have taken place, authentic Jews are judged morally guilty for not having altered their perceived inherited religious posture *in extremis*; in the light of the eternal ideal of the life of the Spirit, they are its highest exemplars, and therefore "holy." They are simultaneously guilty and not guilty, yet any criticism of their actions or inactions is somehow

muted; they are still heroes.

In a sense, Berkovits had no choice but to end the book in this way, regardless of the unevenness in theological presentation which arises. Glorifying the authentic Jews of the Holocaust, he had to come to terms with the spiritual ideal of non-militarism which he imputes to them and its pragmatic limitations. In fact, in light of the ideals of authentic Judaism outlined, had he concluded the book without these final pages, the military might, actions, and concerns of the State of Israel would all have become suspect and problematic; Israel would have had to have been regarded as “inauthentic,” an intolerable and totally false option for Berkovits.

Finally, I can not help but marvel at a delicious irony that pervades the book. Though debunking Western Civilization and stressing its distinctiveness from Judaism, Berkovits essentially adopts the concept of the “authenticity of being” of Martin Heidegger, elaborated by Jean Paul Sartre and Viktor Frankl, as the fundamental conceptual norm by which to evaluate the behavior of authentic Jews *in extremis*. He borrows the basic linguistic and philosophic framework which structure his book from the very Western tradition which he repudiates. Moreover, Western and Jewish ideals even converge, for, indeed, the Jewish ideal of *Kiddush haShem* is the highest manifestation of living autonomously, of “authenticity of being.”

The Faith and Doubt of Holocaust Survivors by Reeve Robert Brenner attempts a rigorous empirical study of the impact of the Holocaust experience on the religious practices and beliefs of survivors. The author applies the techniques of social science to generate the raw data by which to bring statistical precision and objectivity to the subject, in the hope that this process will grant “a greater measure of assurance” to the conclusions reached about the religious change of Holocaust survivors.

The study is based on a questionnaire of more than 100 questions which was administered sometime between 1970—1973 (the book is not precise here) to survivors living only in Israel. Brenner reached a cross-section of 1000 such Israelis chosen by random sampling (he does not inform us of the procedure of this sampling) from lists provided to him by Yad Vashem, Kibbutz LoHamei Haghettaot and a Tel Aviv-based organization of Nazi victims. Of this number, 708 agreed to participate.

The book is divided into five chapters. The first is an introduction which suggests the basic framework of the study and explains, among other things, why it was restricted to Israeli survivors. Chapter two deals with the religious behavior of previously observant and non-observant survivors, and depicts the levels of change in ritual observance over a time span of three stages: shortly before the Holocaust, shortly after the Holocaust, and the present (i.e., early 1970s). Chapter three examines the changes in beliefs in God of previously devout and non-devout survivors over the same three time periods but adds the period of “during the

Holocaust" to its focus. Chapter four, although entitled "The Meaning of the Holocaust," really continues the assessment of the Holocaust's impact on survivors' religious beliefs but concentrates on six specific affirmations: historical tragedies are the will of God; belief in Messiah; Jews are the chosen people; Torah is the word of God; Judaism is a true religion; Judaism is the only true religion. The concluding chapter poses seven questions to survivors which essentially request their current interpretation of the meaning of the Holocaust, and which force them to formulate opinions on extremely difficult theological issues. All but the first chapter provide either percentage statistics and/or tables which quantify survivor responses to basic issues and which supplement Brenner's narrative interpretation of the data. The author also extensively incorporates into each of the last four chapters some absolutely absorbing and remarkable personal testimony of survivors to illustrate some of the conclusions which he draws. These reflections are probably the most enduring and significant contributions of the book; but more on this later.

It is very difficult, if not impossible, to give an overview of some of Brenner's basic conclusions for two reasons. First, there are so many of them, and, second, so many are derived from a flawed methodology that they are rendered useless. Still, from among those which proved interesting and justified, I include the following: 52% of all survivors declared that the Holocaust had not influenced their religious behavior at all and had not made them either more or less ritually observant; thus, 47% of all survivors asserted that the Holocaust had no influence on their beliefs about God; the more intensely observant the survivor was and the more religious doctrines he affirmed, the more the Holocaust reinforced his faith rather than destroyed it; there was no appreciable difference in the impact that the Holocaust had on the religious behavior of survivors of concentration camps as opposed to survivors of non-camp experiences.

In applying social science methodology to this subject, Brenner has taken an innovative and potentially exciting approach to a very delicate area. Some individuals, however, may object to the quantification of survivors' feelings on moral grounds, holding that there are areas of life where science must not trespass. To the author's great credit, he is quite aware of such concerns, just as he exhibits great sensitivity to the sensibilities and feelings of the survivors themselves. Perhaps any moral qualms one may have with the study may best be eased by underscoring the willing participation of survivors themselves. 70% of them gave their *haskamah*; they welcomed the opportunity to talk.

While the book's intent and approach may be lauded, unfortunately, its application of scientific method may not. It is so seriously flawed methodologically that most of its "objective" raw data is simply not usable and calls into question most of the interpretive conclusions at which the author arrives.

In order to measure the impact of the Holocaust on the ritual obser-

vance and religious faith of survivors, Brenner naturally had to begin with certain definitions of who is observant and non-observant. Armed with such definitions, he could then quantify perceived changes over time. He therefore established a sliding scale of observance based on the practice or non-practice of specific rituals, 18 for men, 16 for women and, depending on the number of rituals observed, a survivor was then categorized into one of four groups: non-observant, moderately observant, highly observant, and extremely observant.

The arbitrariness of this classification schema dooms the statistical value of the book from the start. A non-observant survivor was defined as one who kept no more than five of the most universally observed Jewish religious practices, either minimally or their fullest extent: dietary laws; Passover *seder*; Hannukah candles; fasting on Yom Kippur and attending synagogue on that day. One was defined in the category of moderately observant, however, if one observed all these five rituals plus at least one additional from among the following: dietary laws at home; synagogue attendance on the Sabbath and on the festivals, however infrequently; observance of Sabbath in some general way; and, for women, the lighting of Sabbath candles at home. But, by what stretch of the imagination, except sociological artifice, are these distinctions between categories meaningful? Is the number of rituals observed ample justification for a new category? Perhaps some grouped in the non-observant class, because of the intensity (*kavanah*) with which they practice a specific ritual, ought to be considered more observant than others in the moderately observant group? And, perhaps some of the moderately observant, by dint of superficial practice, should be subsumed under the non-observant label? *Adequate* justification for the categories is critical. For most of the book, Brenner lumps all three observant groups together, contrasts the statistics of their religious behaviour and faith changes with those of the non-observant, and reaches major conclusions. But if the categories of non-observant and moderately observant are merely sociological inventions without real justification, and, further, if 25% of all observant survivors belonged to the moderately observant category, the statistical distinctions between observant and non-observant survivors may be so skewed and artificial that any conclusions differentiating the religious impact of the Holocaust on them are without substantive value.

The distinction between highly observant and extremely observant survivors is similarly artificial. Highly observant Jews are those who observe all the commandments associated with the moderately observant group plus at least one more from the following list: fasting on Tisha B'Av; daily prayer; daily use of *tefillin*; observance of Sabbath without electrical switches and without riding in an automobile. But again one may ask whether the observance of one additional ritual should put one out of the moderately observant category into an altogether different one. Moreover, the artificiality of this new category appears compounded.

Given the specific list of rituals enumerated, it is difficult to conceive of a person choosing to practice only one of them: can one imagine a Jew before the Holocaust (and perhaps even today) who fasts on Tisha B'Av but doesn't pray daily? Or, who prays daily but without *tefillin*? One wonders how many of these highly observant Jews were only one ritual away from the moderately observant group; it seems more likely that they were only one ritual away (in Brenner's schema) from the extremely observant group. And if so, one is again confronted with the question: does a difference in one ritual practice justify a new socio-religious category? The only conclusions relating to observant Jews that seem warranted are those that deal with religious change in broad terms on a sliding continuum which correlate to greater or lesser degrees of observance and non-observance.

More technically, Brenner's statistical results are highly problematic, for he seems to commit a major error in statistical measurement. He uses descriptive statistics in an inferential manner without specifying the basis for his subsequent conclusions. How does one know that his percentages arose due to *real* differences and not due to chance, for instance, or to a biased sample, or specific kinds of interview techniques? Moreover, he gives no confidence limits for his percentages and, without these, one cannot gauge the accuracy of those percentages.

Then, too, even if one were to accept all his statistics and discount his arbitrary definitions, we would still be left with the question of meaning. If, for example, 48% of observant Jews remained consistently observant from just prior to the Holocaust until today, what does that suggest and mean? How does one evaluate that figure? Does it represent a significant number? More than expected? Less? Should one be surprised? These problems emerge because Brenner begins with no hypothesis against which to judge his results. He is not unaware of the problem (p. 43). As he correctly notes, we have no way of ascertaining what the proportion of religious change would have been without the Holocaust. Nor, to my knowledge, do we have social science studies measuring the religious change of other groups responding to their catastrophes which might serve as a model by which to evaluate the Jewish religious response. (Even if we did, it is conceivable that some might argue that because the Holocaust as catastrophe is *sui generis*, other quantitative models are not appropriate.)

An additional serious methodological issue which suggests itself from the book is this: to what extent can one meaningfully quantify the transition of a survivor's religious faith and beliefs in specific religious doctrines? Certainly, a survivor may recall that he/she believed in a personal God before the Holocaust and did/did not during the Holocaust and does/does not today, and one can tabulate such data (see ch. 3). But can one similarly measure the change in survivors' beliefs about such complex ideas as the coming of the messiah, chosen people, Torah as the word of

God, Judaism as a true religion, Judaism as the only true religion, and catastrophes as resulting from the will of God? This is the substance of chapter four, which I found the weakest and least credible. In addition to the general problem of the accuracy of their memory on such abstract issues, it is very hard to imagine that most survivors had articulate positions on these theological matters before the Holocaust. How many laymen, then or now, had adopted conscious theological postures on these issues? Furthermore, 37% of Brenner's sample were 13–18 years old during the war and 38% of his sample were between 18–27. Had so many of these youngsters before the war arrived at precise theological formulations of doctrinal belief?

Besides these criticisms of the book, a few of perhaps lesser consequence ought to be mentioned. It would have been quite helpful to have seen the entire questionnaire; the book provides only some of the questions in the body of the narrative. The book also is often quite confusing, mainly because of the author's presentation of statistical data. Brenner could have put more of the data in tabular form. He cites percentages throughout, but uncomfortably mixes percentages dealing with the survivor population as a whole with those relating only to one of the two main categories, i.e., observant or non-observant, and with those relating to one of the sub-groups, i.e., moderately observant, highly observant, and extremely observant. The result is a data-laden narrative which is frequently hard to follow. The book is also strewn with so many conclusions, in italics, based on the statistics, that these, too, contribute to the confusion and sometimes to apparent contradictions, (e.g., p. 51–71% of the highly observant assert they were uninfluenced by the Holocaust in their religious practices, vs. p. 67 — “the more intensely observant, the more frequently the Holocaust is associated with religious change”).

I also find unconvincing one of Brenner's basic justifications for restricting his sample to Israel's survivors. He deemed it vital to find a Jewish social milieu in which religious practices were observed from truly religious motives and were not due to socio-ethnic factors or from a prevailing religious tone endemic in society. He argues that since Israel, unlike America, is in ethos an irreligious society and since a survivor need not express Jewish identity in religious terms to live a full Jewish life, only in Israel “can the religious element be isolated from the ethnic variable.” But this conclusion just does not ring true. Religion in Israel has been thoroughly ethnicized, and basic holidays, and ritual customs have been incorporated into national-cultural life. Brenner is more on the mark in asserting that Israel's small size, numerically and geographically, greatly facilitated the kind of study which he undertook, no small consideration for a social scientist.

While Brenner has not persuaded me that his book is “invaluable” because it offers “an objective look at survivor attitudes” (p. 249), I have nothing but unqualified praise for the stirring autobiographical survivor

testimonies which he has judiciously selected and incorporated into the book. These personal accounts reveal the whole spectrum of religious reactions to the Holocaust. There are survivors, both religious and atheistic prior to the calamity, for whom the Holocaust is of no religious import (p. 13); there are Jews whose religious attitudes were subtly changed — “I keep the *mitzvot* . . . but today I just go through the motions. My heart is not in it” (pp. 59–60); and Jews who lost their faith — “we, because of our experience and what we witnessed, know there is no God. God is a myth” (p. 109). Some Jewish atheists, admittedly a small number, even became believers and observant because of the Holocaust (pp. 71–72, 119–120).

The categories of explanation for the Holocaust vary. Some do not flinch from seeing it as punishment for Jewish sins; others resort to the image of Jews as “suffering servants,” while still others hear a message of God from Auschwitz to obey all His *mizvot*. Some even accept the State of Israel as God’s just compensation for the Holocaust and judge it an acceptable pay-off. One of the most savagely ironic explanations, brilliant in its own way, comes from a Jewish atheist who reversed the traditional imagery of God testing His people. For him, the Holocaust represented a gigantic laboratory experiment, not of man but of God: “it was a stupendous test; unconscious and unintentional, but a test nevertheless. And God failed the test and proved His own non-existence. And I, as part of the experiment, stopped believing in Him altogether” (p. 110). Sadly, the fact is that even when the tables are turned and God is tested, it is still the Jews who ultimately suffer. What can we say about them, or about the Jew who nightly recited Kaddish for God? (p. 118). I think that Berkovits is right: there is “holy belief” and “holy disbelief,” and one must stand in awe of both.

What is intriguing, though not unexpected, is that these religious responses of survivors mirror some of the fundamental insights of contemporary Jewish theologians. From the mouth of survivors, however, these feelings reflect an anguished earnestness and an unintellectualized authenticity which come only from those who had the experience. The use of the Deuteronomic sin-punishment motif parallels that of right-wing Orthodox thinkers like the Satmarer Rebbe and Rabbi Y. Hutner. One survivor ardently affirms his Jewishness in terms somewhat reminiscent of Fackenheim’s insertion of Hitler as the central motivating force for the Jew’s practice of Judaism, so as not to give him a posthumous victory. Another survivor, echoing Richard Rubenstein, rejects God because he cannot accept a God who would use Hitler as his agent: “I’ll tell you why I lost my faith in God in the Holocaust. Because if God exists then he’s a monster. And Hitler was God’s deputy on earth. Do you want me to believe that? I’d rather be an atheist” (p. 111). Irving Greenberg’s emphasis on living a dialectical faith is heard from another survivor who informs us that he “keeps after” God, as His interlocuter, by creating and inventing, like the traditional Jew of the past in history, new arguments *against*

Him, and new justifications *for* Him" (p. 98). Still another reminds us of both Fackenheim and Greenberg, who have stressed the religious dimension of the supposedly secular State of Israel, when he proclaims that he performs "modern mitzvot": voting in Israeli elections, paying Israeli taxes, serving in its army, founding kibbutzim, and studying "today's Torah" — modern Mideast politics (p. 63).

Reading these books, one is struck by the enormous complexity of Jewish religious responses to the Holocaust. Ultimately, a complete understanding and true appreciation of the entire range of Jewish faith experiences or lack of faith responses may forever escape us, for the possibilities of religious reactions are as diverse as the number of Jews themselves who experienced the catastrophe.

Certainly, by reading the Berkovits and Brenner books together one gains an invaluable insight into both the scope and limitations of applying theological and social science methods of analysis to the faith of the Jews who underwent the Holocaust. For example, the great value and merit of the theological endeavor lies in its quest to discover purpose and meaning underlying reality. Berkovits' theological interpretation of the meaning of Jewish faith and his placing it in a vertical historical continuum of Jewish faith throughout the ages is an admirable and, indeed, desirable undertaking. Yet, his approach also reveals the potential dangers inherent in theological interpretation of human behavior and historical events. The theologian must guard against superimposing his conceptually derived definition of religion and faith on the people themselves. Moreover, he ought not to formulate theological propositions which disregard historical fact or which violate sound, considered historical judgment; good theology can be grounded only in good history.

Similarly, the social science framework of explaining phenomena has much to commend it. The attempt to describe and explain behavior in an impartial, value-free way is a laudatory goal, as is the commitment to methodological rigor in devising a statistically accurate and valid technique allowing for broad generalizations based on limited samples of data. Nevertheless, that approach is also fraught with peril, as is evidenced by Brenner's book. The social scientist must be careful not to manipulate categories of human experience through artificial classifications. He must also realize that by asking questions which the respondent had not previously thought about or by phrasing questions in a certain way to generate hard data, the interviewer or researcher can quite unconsciously and unintentionally channel the multiplicity of human emotions into precast restrictive molds.

Can theologians and social scientists avoid their respective pitfalls? Perhaps. But it may well be that in pursuing generalizations, analytic or descriptive, the modes of discourse of both theology and social science almost necessarily distort the unique religious experience of the individual. And therein lies the most significant limitations of these intellec-

tual disciplines. The full gamut of the possible meanings of human faith cannot be circumscribed by any one theological point of view; the full spectrum of religious response to the Holocaust cannot be quantified. It may well be, therefore, that the most meaningful mode of discourse for dealing with this subject is autobiography.

Here, then, is an important lesson. Let survivors, if they can and if they will, tell their tales of religious response. Let us collect as many of these accounts as we can; let us also assiduously assemble all the stories of faith and lack of faith of those who perished. Then let us read and re-read, tell and re-tell these stories. In this way, perhaps, we may begin to comprehend, albeit in fragmentary fashion, both the trauma and drama of religion and irreligion confronting the atrocity of the Holocaust; perhaps through these stories we may find faith orientations or non-faith postures of import and value to our own lives.

The Perfection of God and the Presence of Evil

KENNETH R. SEESKIN

IN A RECENT ARTICLE, I ATTEMPTED TO SHOW that a great deal of Jewish theology is incapable of accounting for human suffering.¹ Although this criticism applies to other theologies as well it is especially telling in Judaism, where suffering has been so much a part of our history.

The Bible presents a world in which suffering and evil are causally related. By the Book of Job, however, this view is scrutinized and found wanting. Overcome by calamities, Job is visited by three friends. Under the circumstances, it is reasonable for him to expect solace. But his friends face a serious problem: How can one offer solace by appealing to the doctrine that suffering is a punishment for sin? Job is told that no innocent man has ever perished and that the only way for him to save himself is to repent. Not surprisingly, he feels betrayed. He tells Eliphaz that if their situations were reversed:

I would strengthen you with my mouth,
And the moving of my lips would assuage your grief (16:5).

But Eliphaz cannot assuage the grief of his friends; his theology will not let him.

Those theologians who share Eliphaz's view find themselves in the same predicament. God is responsible for everything which happens because nothing can happen without His consent. It follows that suffering has a divine sanction and must serve a divine purpose. But how does one say to the poor, the sick, or the bereaved that their plight meets with God's approval? The Talmud claims that it is forbidden to mimic Eliphaz and tell the afflicted that their suffering is the result of a previous transgression (*Bab. Mez.* 58b). But if it is true, as the proverb says, that "Evil pursueth sinners," and if it is true, as the Talmud says in another context, that "There is no suffering without iniquity" (*Shab.* 55a), why should one be prevented from pointing this out? Indeed, why should one be prevented from pointing this out to the sinner himself?

The answer is that moral intuitions are stronger than theological dogmas. We do not tell the afflicted that they are getting what they

1. "The Reality of Radical Evil," *JUDAISM*, 29 (1980): 440-453.

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deserve because we know, in many cases, that they are not. The pious man is humbled in the face of suffering and does not invoke God to make a dubious judgment on someone else's life, particularly if that person is his friend. It is for good reason, then, that God tells Eliphaz:

My wrath is kindled against thee, and against thy two friends; for ye have not spoken of Me the thing that is right (42:7).

But what becomes of the insight that God is responsible for everything which happens? Worse, what becomes of this insight when we leave the suffering of a single man and consider the suffering of the Jewish people as a whole? Often what results is an evasion — All suffering is necessary to achieve some greater good — or an admission of ignorance — God's will is utterly mysterious. Every theology must end with a confession of ignorance sooner or later. But if this confession is *too* soon, if we find ourselves giving pat answers to deep questions, then, like Eliphaz, we will not be saying of God what is right.

I

One reason that the problem of evil seems intractable is that people have not bothered to ask what its solution is supposed to provide. Is one writing to "justify" the ways of God to man? make evil more palatable to those suffering from it? or minimize the impact of evil in human history?

None of the above is an acceptable task. There is no question of justifying God to man because God needs no justification, and even if He did, it is doubtful whether we could provide one. The idea of making evil more palatable raises serious moral questions (cf. Isaiah 5:20). Is this not the sort of task which we associate with Satan? Minimizing the impact of evil in human history, if it was untenable in the past, is unthinkable in the present.

Another approach to solving the problem has been to strip God of one of his perfections. It is said that God, though very powerful, is not omnipotent. Levi Olan put it this way:

God is limited. He is non-absolute. Like a human father, He cannot do everything and anything. In the childhood of the race, God was King of Kings, the absolute ruler. As a child matures, the father loses some of his almighty capacities and becomes a loving parent, necessarily, helpful, but limited. This metaphor suffers from anthropomorphism. It is only to suggest in human language a possible understanding of God.²

But even if we allow Rabbi Olan's use of metaphor, the idea of a limited God is profoundly unsatisfying. How can we worship a Being in one breath and point out His imperfections in another? The problem is that *perfection* is an all or nothing concept. To the degree that God is limited,

2. "An Unrepentant Liberal Jew," in Ira Eisenstein (ed.), *Varieties of Jewish Belief* (New York: Reconstructionist Press, 1966), p. 153.

He is on the same metaphysical footing as His creatures. But if this is so, we must ask what is meant by calling Him "God" at all.

Let us adopt as a principle that any property which God has, He has to a superlative degree. Thus, it is absurd to suggest He can move mountains but only very small ones. If God can move a single grain of sand on the beach then He can move the whole continent of which it is a part. If He is wise, then His wisdom never falters. If He is just, then His justice is never compromised.

One response to the problem of evil is to deny God's existence altogether. This is not the time to establish the existence of a Supreme Being. Still, let us be clear on one point — that from an ethical perspective, atheism leaves the problem of evil exactly as it was. If Eliphaz could not console his friend by appealing to a causal connection between suffering and evil, neither could he console him by proclaiming the death of God. Job cries out to heaven for an explanation of his misfortune. How would it help him to learn that no one is listening?

II.

Rather than apologize for evil or strip God of one of His perfections, I propose that we ask whether we understand what are His perfections. The one which has caused the most trouble is omnipotence. The Bible speaks of God's majesty and authority, but it nowhere ascribes to Him the property of being omnipotent. The reason for this is that omnipotence is a theological concept, but the Bible is not a theological treatise. The usual reply is that while it is not mentioned, the concept of omnipotence is nonetheless implied. After all, can anything be too difficult for the Lord? (Genesis 18:14; cf. Jeremiah 32:37).

Before answering this question, it would be helpful to consider whence our concept of omnipotence is derived. One starting point is the Hebrew word *Shaddai*, usually translated "Almighty." The origin of this word is unclear, and when it came to translating the Bible into Greek, problems arose. Since it is a proper name of God (Exodus 6:3), one would expect the translators to pick a single Greek equivalent and stick with it no matter how rough the equivalence might be. But one's expectations are not fulfilled. Sometimes it is translated *theos* ("God") with no mention of might or authority (e.g., Isaiah 8:6). Sometimes it is translated *ho epouranios* ("The Heavenly One"), recalling Zeus and Mt. Olympus. Sometimes it is translated *kurios* ("Lord" or "Master"), suggesting that the notion of authority is paramount (Job 5:17, 6:4). Sometimes the translators seem to miss the meaning of it entirely and render it as a pronoun modifying *El* (e.g., Genesis 17:1, 28:3, 35:1, 48:3).³ The most noticeable instance of this phenomenon is Exodus 6:3, where the Greek text has: "I

3. For conjecture on the reason for this translation, see C.H. Dodd, *The Bible and the Greeks* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1935), p. 14.

appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as *their* God," instead of "as God Almighty."

This much is clear: the translators were groping for a Greek term which captures the unique qualities of the biblical God and were more or less successful. In Job, divergences in translation become philosophically significant. *Shaddai* is rendered *pantokratōr* ("The One who rules everything"). But, on one occasion (8:3), it is rendered *ho ta panta poiēsas* ("The One who made everything"). Clearly, more than one idea is being expressed. The Greek work *kratein* suggests might or power but often power *over* something, hence rule or domain. In some contexts (e.g., Jeremiah 5:4, 44:7, Amos 3:13, Habakkuk 2:13, Zechariah 8:2,6), *pantokratōr* is used to translate *zevaot* as in *Adonai Zevaot*. But the word *poiēin* simply means to make or do something: it suggests power or capacity but not necessarily the rightful exercise of it.

In the Vulgate or Latin edition, *pantokratōr* and, derivatively, *El-Shaddai*, become *deus omnipotens*. But the same ambiguity persists. The Latin *potentia* can mean either (1) influence, authority, or dominion, or (2) power, capacity, or ability. Thus, *deus omnipotens* could be interpreted in either of two ways: God is the supreme authority in the world because nothing else has an unqualified claim to our allegiance, or God is the supreme force in the world because He can do anything at all. The *Oxford English Dictionary* lists both as meanings of our word *omnipotent*.

In a recent work, Peter Geach argues that the second meaning of omnipotence (namely, ability to do anything at all) is incoherent.⁴ But incoherent or not, it is the one that most theologians use. The only discussion is whether "anything at all" means anything which is logically possible or anything simpliciter. Is there support for this understanding of omnipotence in the Bible? G.F. Morre argues that there is not:

The Almighty power of God was not in Judaism a theological attribute of omnipotence which belongs in idea to the perfection of God; it was, as in the prophets, the assurance that nothing can withstand his judgment or thwart his purpose.⁵

I believe that Moore is right and that the problem of evil cannot be solved unless the theological attribute of omnipotence is abandoned.

There is, to begin with, something peculiar about the ability to do anything. It is a short step from omnipotence, as normally understood, to a quality implying moral turpitude. Like the Greek word *panourgōs*, the English expression, "He's capable of anything" suggests craftiness or knavery. In fact, Shakespeare uses *omnipotent* in this way in *I Henry IV*, I. ii, 121: "This is the most omnipotent Villaine, that euer cryed. . ." The connotations of this word are such that one ought to be very careful in applying it to God. The simple truth is that God is *not* capable of anything.

4. *Providence and Evil* (London: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1977), chap. 1.

5. *Judaism I* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1927; rpt. 1966), p. 375.

He cannot deceive people, break promises, exhibit cruelty, or do a host of other things.

Someone will object that by saying that God is incapable of cruelty, I am limiting His power. After all, men not only are capable of it, they exhibit it all the time. How is it possible that we can do something which God cannot? The objection is valid if we interpret omnipotence in the usual way. If God cannot act cruelly, then He cannot do anything at all. But the objection becomes a worthless sophism if we interpret omnipotence as supreme authority. God's sovereignty not only does not require the capacity for cruelty, it prohibits it.

To see this point in a different way, consider human authorities. If one is a positivist, he will maintain that authority is simply the power to exercise one's will. He will not admit that authority has anything to do with rightfulness or legitimacy. A legal system, on this view, is nothing but a series of orders backed by threats. If one cannot make good on his threats, his authority vanishes. In short, the positivist denies the distinction which I have been trying to make and equates authority with mere capacity.

But do we want to extend this analysis to God? Do we want to say that His sovereignty over the world derives from His ability to threaten it? Surely not. The prophet Zechariah (4:3) tells us: "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts." When we say that God is omnipotent, we mean that He stands in an asymmetric relation to the world: He is the rightful judge of everything else, and nothing is the rightful judge of Him. Thus Isaiah asks:

Who has meted out the spirit of the Lord?
Or who was His counsellor that he might instruct Him?
And taught Him in the path of right,
And taught Him knowledge,
And made Him to know the way of discernment? (40:13)

This, I submit, is the true concept of omnipotence, not the property which philosophers talk about when they ask whether God can make a stone too heavy to lift or put the world through the hole in a signet ring without shrinking the one or expanding the other.

III.

The point of this argument is not to deny that God is omnipotent, but to deny that He is omnipotent *in the sense in which most philosophers understand it*. The problem is that if we take omnipotence in the usual way, we cannot help but separate divine power and divine goodness. Power in the sense of mere capacity to do something is morally neutral. We cannot praise it until we know to what end it is being put. If God is powerful in this sense, we will have to introduce another faculty — the will — to explain why He uses His power in the right way. But one departs from Jewish tradition when he conceives of God as a conglomeration of faculties or attributes. He is not an agent composed of a will, a mind, and a reserve of

energy, all of which can be used for separate purposes. On the contrary, He is one — radically one — and will remain so no matter what we wish to say of Him. As Maimonides observed long ago:

There cannot be any belief in the unity of God except by admitting that He is one simple substance, without any composition or plurality of elements; one from whatever side you view it, and by whatever test you examine it. . . .⁶

His power is His goodness, which, in turn, is the infallibility of His will.

There is a lesson to be learned here and it is this. If our conception of divine power is distinguishable from that of divine goodness, then our conception of divine power is mistaken. Put otherwise, God possesses no properties which are morally neutral. As the source of all goodness in the world, His power cannot be compared to the brute force which we associate with freight trains, earthquakes, or colliding galaxies. These things have tremendous destructive potential, but they do not command our devotion. It is not that God is weaker than a freight train, but that His power must be understood in a quite different way.

How, then, do we reply to the question: Is there anything too difficult for the Lord? I believe that the answer is still negative in the sense that there are no limitations on His perfection. We can address Him as "Almighty," but we must be careful not to read misleading connotations into His name. The Bible (I Kings 19:11–12) tells us the power of Almighty God is not manifested in the breaking of rocks, the shaking of the earth, or the heat of a fire; it is manifested in the still small voice which speaks the truth. If the teachings of Judaism are correct, the universe has no higher authority.

IV.

The problems of the previous section concern more than omnipotence; they lead directly to the issue of the unity of the divine attributes. It seems that we run into trouble whenever we speak of God's *doing* something. To discuss agency we have to invoke concepts like choice, deliberation, means/ends, etc. Having invoked such concepts, we are forced to posit faculties or attributes corresponding to them. The difficulty of speaking this way, as Maimonides saw, is that it makes God a plurality. To perform an action, He must understand what He is doing, will to do it, and have the power to carry out His intention. But each of the qualities is separate in notion from the other two.

Maimonides' response to this problem was to argue that, strictly speaking, God cannot be the subject of a true predication. In saying that He is wise, for example, we are only denying that He is ignorant. But negative theology gives rise to a problem of its own. Crescas argued that there is no difference between the negation of a negative quality like ignorance and the assertion of a positive one like knowledge. If he is right,

6. *Guide to the Perplexed* 1.51.

then our original problem remains: How do we speak of God in such way that we preserve His unity?

My own response is to resist that tendency to speak of God's *doing* this or that and follow Buber in speaking about divine presence. This is more than a change in emphasis, for God does not present Himself as a multiplicity. We do not have to introduce a plurality of faculties to say that, at pivotal moments in history, man confronts the Holy Spirit. But here, too, we must be careful. God's presence does not necessitate a previous act of the will. It is not that He chooses to be present here instead of there so that enterprising theologians can speculate on the reason why. He is always present if only man would make the effort to find Him. As the Psalmist asks: "Whither shall I go from Thy spirit? Or whither shall I flee from Thy presence?" (139:7). By the same token, His presence does not require disruption of the natural order. He does not have to suspend the force of gravity for us to see that He is superior to it. There was miracle enough in the still small voice which spoke to Elijah.

It follows that we must not think of God as a supernatural agent regulating the flow of history in the way that the Greek gods regulated the flow of the Trojan War. We can affirm the existence of miracles; but the fundamental category which we use to describe them must be revelation rather than intercession. In short, we must not look to God as a source of magic. We must not, as Kant once remarked, allow our theology to become a demonology.⁷ It will do no good to ask Him to put money in our pocket or stop the bullets of the enemy. More to the point, God does not "will" that children be brutalized, that decent people be run over by cars, or that the inhabitants of a village be wiped out by a flood. Harold Schulweis put this point as well as anyone when he said:

To conceive of God's running nature as we conduct our affairs only leads to the embarrassment of defending God each time lightning strikes or gales devastate the innocent. It leads us to strain for occult moral purposes behind each natural tragedy, and to associate God's activity with havoc and catastrophe.⁸

In this respect, the ancient Rabbis were right: it is a mistake to look for a divine sanction to human suffering.

But the mistake is more than a misapprehension of divine nature. If I prosper during my neighbor's misfortune, it is sheer arrogance for me to suppose that I loom larger in God's eyes than he does. Intrinsically, my life is no more valuable than his and certainly no more valuable than were the millions who died defending the Holy name.

The nature of Eliphaz' offense should now be clear. God does not disapprove of those stricken with poverty, disease, or natural disaster. The whole reason for turning to God in times of distress is that such

7. *Critique of Judgment*, p. 44.

8. "Suffering and Evil," in Millgram (ed.), *Great Jewish Ideas* (B'nai B'rith Press, 1969), p. 215.

afflictions do *not* constitute the final verdict on a person's life. However harshly nature may deal with someone, God may treat him with mercy. By assuming that God acts *through* nature, Eliphaz has given nature an importance greater than what it deserves. The physical circumstances in which a person finds himself do not necessarily reflect his moral worth and cannot be taken as expressing the will of his Creator.

V.

Let us return to the Holocaust and the existence of radical evil. The most common question one hears is: How did God allow this to happen? Again, the implication is that God is responsible — that if only we are clever enough we will come up with a reason why He permitted Hitler to live. When such reasons fail — as they invariably do — many theologians fall back on the inscrutability of God's will. It was part of His plan that Hitler should live, but we will never understand why. These theologians share with atheism the view that evil raises a problem about God. Yet where atheism tells us there is too much evil to believe in God, they tell us that the God we believe in is shrouded in mystery. Both leave the prevalence of evil unexplained and the question of what to do about it undressed.

But is God's will really inscrutable? Are we in doubt over what He has sanctioned or did He dispel such doubts when He gave us the *Torah*? The Bible answers this question directly:

For this commandment which I command thee this day, it is not too hard for thee, neither is it far off. It is not in heaven, that thou shouldest say: "Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it to us, and make us to hear it, that we may do it?" Neither is it beyond the sea, that thou shouldest say: "Who shall go over the sea for us, and bring it unto us, and make us to hear it, that we may do it?" But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it. (Deuteronomy 30:11-14).

Let us not look for a mystery where none exists. The will of God is written on the heart of every man and codified in the form of commandments. If someone decides not to follow it, then man, not God, is responsible for the consequences. We will not make any headway in understanding what happened in Nazi Germany until we abandon the idea that the problem has to do with God. The real question is: How did *man* allow this to happen?

According to Deuteronomy, man's predicament is clear: God has set before him the law. He can follow it and thereby choose life, or disobey it and choose death. The mystery, if there is one, lies with us. How is it possible for someone to choose death? Worse, how is it possible for such a person to assume a position of leadership in a civilized country?

I cannot claim to have plumbed the depths of the human soul, but I suspect that we have always known the answer. It is not our animal nature, because animals are incapable of genocide. It is the tendency of man to

follow other gods — false gods. Radical evil involves more than a turning away from God; it involves turning away and putting something awful in His place. Whether it is the will to power, the master race, the working class, or unlimited technological expansion, the false gods have this much in common: they deny the dignity of human life and insist that human life be sacrificed. In this respect, they are the same as the pagan deities of old. They appeal to fear and, in the last analysis, worship brute strength. The futility of such “worship” has always been manifest. Brute strength is blind: it destroys everything in its path, including those most enamored of its brutality. That is why God tells us that to turn away from Him and disobey the commandments is ultimately to turn towards death.

As Jews, we believe that God will triumph over evil because, in the true sense of power, only He is powerful. Like the golden calf, false gods are the work of human hands. They are real and often terrifying. But His authority alone is the measure of human action rather than another of the things measured by it. We must not assume, however, that God’s “triumph” will be a cosmic deluge complete with fire and brimstone. Evil will be eradicated only if man first comes to see what is written on his heart.



Torah

MELVIN WILK

It wasn't the Garden lost, nor just another temple.
When Jews are banished, out goes God.

The word made flesh is not sufficient.
Flesh dies.

Revelation is an ax.
And how rooted we are in the unsaved world!

The first voice in the first writing is fire-fierce.
So we may hear in God's silence a blessing.

What we cannot hear, we must endure together,
serving as God's sanctuary in the world.

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Rabbi Nachman of Bratslav: Forerunner of Modern Jewish Literature

HOWARD SCHWARTZ

THE EMERGENCE, IN THE PRESENT CENTURY, of a flourishing modern Jewish literature was made possible by the evolution from a sacred written tradition to a consciously literary, secular one. A key figure in this transition was the Hasidic master, Rabbi Nachman of Bratslav (1770-1810). From his mother's side, Rabbi Nachman was the great-grandson of the Baal Shem Tov, founder of Hasidism. From his father's side, Nachman was a descendant of the famous Rabbi Judah Loew of Prague, known as the Maharal, to whom legend attributes the creation of the Golem, a man made out of clay. Thus, from his birth, the greatest expectations were held for Rabbi Nachman, and in light of these it is not surprising that he believed, from a young age, that his destiny was a great one, perhaps even messianic in nature.

In the 17th century there had been a great messianic uproar centered around Shabbatai Zevi, who ultimately proved to be a false messiah by converting, under duress, to Islam. But before that happened, hundreds of thousands of euphoric Jews made preparations to sell their possessions and follow him to the Land of Israel. Unlike Shabbatai Zevi, Rabbi Nachman never openly declared a messianic role for himself,¹ nor did he succeed in acquiring more than a small circle of Hasidim who accepted him as a *Tzaddik*, much less a messianic figure. Yet, since his death, Rabbi Nachman's importance has continued to grow so that he now stands as one of the most highly regarded Hasidic figures after the Baal Shem.

Perhaps the primary reason for Rabbi Nachman's importance lies in the tales that he told. For in the last years of his life, Rabbi Nachman chose to clothe his teachings in the garb of fairy tales about unhappy kings, lost princesses and loyal ministers. Despite their apparent simplicity, however, these tales are actually complex and mysterious allegories. Thus, Nachman was the first *rebbe* to make the telling of tales the primary method of conveying his teachings. While previous Hasidic masters, including the Baal Shem, had been the subject of a rich body of miracle

1. Although Rabbi Nachman did not publicly declare such a messianic role for himself, it appears that he may have viewed himself as the possible *Tzaddik ha-dor* or potential Messiah ben Joseph of his generation, who would prepare the way for the coming of Messiah ben David. See Arthur Green's biography of Nachman, *Tormented Master*, for a full discussion of Nachman's messianic aspirations. For more on Shabbatai Zevi see Gershom Scholem's *Shabbatai Zevi*.

tales,² and some masters, such as the Baal Shem Tov and Rabbi Levi Yitzhak of Berditshev told occasional brief *maasehs*, none had made a practice of telling tales as a primary method of instruction. But this is precisely what Rabbi Nachman did in the last four years of his life, and these tales have achieved international renown and now exist in English in five translations.³

The reasons that led Rabbi Nachman to begin telling tales are veiled in mystery, but some surmises can be made. During most of his life there was an alternation of periods in which he felt a mythic sense of destiny and all-pervasive meaning with periods of deep despair and the sense that he knew nothing. Eventually, he came to regard these periods of despair as inevitable, and even incorporated them into his vision, teaching that a descent must precede every ascent. With such teachings Nachman came to function almost as a therapist to his disciples, leading them through the depths as well as the heights. Even after the death of his young son, Shlomo Ephraim, and the abandonment of any messianic aspirations that he may have held either for himself or his son, Nachman did not retreat into silence, but discovered a new form of expression for his messianic impulses — the tales he began to tell in his final years. It is in these tales that Rabbi Nachman finally embraced his true destiny.

Since Jewish folklore had flourished as an oral tradition among the common folk (if not among the rabbis) from at least the early middle ages, it was not an illogical mode of expression for Nachman. However, it must be remembered that this folklore had never achieved anything like the status of the various sacred literatures, and not until the late middle ages was any effort made to record these tales. Eventually, some of them were preserved in collections such as *The Maaseh Book* and *Tzene Rene*, which became widely known.⁴

It is apparent, however, that despite the low status of folklore, and its universal — as opposed to specifically Jewish — character, Nachman felt drawn to this mode of expression in a powerful way. One clue for this attraction can be found in those of his dreams that have been preserved. The most striking quality is their similarity to Nachman's tales, as in the following excerpt:

As I ascended the mountain, I saw a golden tree with branches of gold. From the branches hung all sorts of vessels that were like those depicted in the book. Inside those vessels were other vessels that were made out of these

2. See *Shivhei ha-Besht*, the earliest and most famous collection of legends about the Baal Shem. This has been translated into English by Dan Ben-Amos and Jerome R. Mintz as *In Praise of the Baal Shem Tov*.

3. These are *Classic Hasidic Tales* by Meyer Levin (which also includes versions of the tales of the Baal Shem Tov); *The Tales of Rabbi Nachman* by Martin Buber; *Beggars and Prayers* by Adin Steinsaltz; *Nachman of Bratslav: The Tales* by Arnold J. Band; and *The Thirteen Stories of Rebbe Nachman of Breslev*, translated by Ester Koenig, edited by Mordechai Kramer. Other Nachman tales will be found in *Yenne Velt: The Great Jewish Works of Fantasy and the Occult*.

4. *The Maaseh Book* has been translated into English by Moses Gaster. *Tzene Rene* has not yet been translated.

vessels and the letters in them. I wanted to take the vessels from there, but I couldn't because the thicket did not permit me to get through.⁵

Often these dreams also seem like condensed versions of one of Nachman's epic tales, such as "The Master of Prayer" or "The Seven Beggars," as the following dream, recorded in its entirety, demonstrates:

Once I saw in my dream that I woke up in a forest which was endless and I wanted to return. One came to me and said: "In this forest one can never come to its end for it is so long it is infinite and all the instruments and the vessels of this world are made from this forest." He showed me a way to get out of the forest. This way brought me to a river. I wanted to come to the end of the river. A man came and said: "It is impossible to reach the end of the river, for the river is boundless. All the people of this world drink from the source of this river." But then he showed me a way to go out through the river. Then I came to a mill which stood at the side of the river, and someone came and said to me: "Here is ground the food for all the people in the world." And I again entered the forest where I saw a smith working, and entered into the smithy and they told me: "This smith makes the vessels for the whole world."⁶

Such dreams raise the possibility that Nachman based his tales on his dreams, elaborating on them in the retelling. However, it is not possible to confirm this hypothesis since none of the surviving dreams contain material that was directly incorporated into the tales.

Most of all, the essential qualities of the enchanted world of fairy tales, with its solutions that inevitably draw on the magical, and the ability of the good to prevail despite the odds, were all enormously appealing to Nachman, and reflect his own world vision, in which the power of faith can surmount any obstacle.

The tale of "The Lost Princess," for example, has as its primary motif a theme that commonly reappears in world folklore as a quest in which a prince sets out to rescue a princess who has fallen under an evil spell.⁷ For

5. From *Fragments of a Future Scroll* by Rabb. Zalman Schachter, p. 99. This book contains the most extensive translation of Nachman's dreams available in English, pp. 95-100. Additional dreams are reported in Arthur Green's *Tormented Master*, pp. 165-166.

6. Schachter, pp. 99-100.

7. Compare the following passage from an Italian folktale, "The Enchanted Palace," whose theme and setting are in many ways identical to that of "The Lost Princess," with a similar passage from that tale:

The queen arrived. With cries, embraces, slaps in the face, kisses and shakes, she did her best to awaken Fiordinando. But realizing she would not succeed, she began weeping so violently that instead of tears a few drops of blood trickled down her cheeks. She wiped the blood off with her handkerchief, which she placed over Fiordinando's face. Then she got back into her carriage and sped straight to Peterborough. (*Italian Folktales*, selected and retold by Italo Calvino, p. 235).

And after the troops had passed, a carriage came by, in which sat the daughter of the king. As soon as she recognized him, she left the carriage and approached him. And although she shook him very strongly, he did not wake up, and she began to lament. . . . Not long afterwards he woke up and asked his servant, "Where am I?" The servant told him all that had happened. . . . Then the minister saw the kerchief and asked: "Whence did this come?" And the servant told him that the lost princess had written on it with her tears. So the minister took it and lifted it up towards the sun. There it was written that she was no longer to be found in the palace, but from then on would make her home in a palace of pearls upon a golden mountain, and that it was there that he would find her. ("The Lost Princess," retold by Howard Schwartz)

the uninitiated, this tale is simply one more variant on a common theme. But among Nachman's Hasidim it was understood that this, and all of Nachman's tales, contained meanings hidden from all but those who knew how to seek them out. Thus, among the Bratslav Hasidim, Nachman's tales are regarded as sacred texts, and are studied from every angle and subjected to the same thorough exegesis as are the sacred scriptures.⁸

In *Sichos HaRan* (The Wisdom of Rabbi Nachman, 180) Rabbi Nachman is quoted by Rabbi Nathan, his scribe, as saying that "Even a *Tzaddik* who searches after lost things is himself sometimes lost, as it is written: *They shall search and be lost* (Ps. 83:18)." This statement reveals the personal dimension of "The Lost Princess" — that Nachman identified with the loyal minister who devotes his life to the quest of finding the lost princess. Nachman's statement about the lost *Tzaddik* is also a comment on the necessity of accepting the futility and extended effort that is required for a successful ascent. From an early period, the princess in "The Lost Princess" was identified with the *Shekhinah*, the Sabbath Queen and Bride of God, and in some readings the messenger who seeks her is identified as the Messiah. Thus, the tale can be understood to mean that once the Messiah has found the *Shekhinah* and brought her out of exile, then he will be free to usher in the End of Days. Or, conversely, it could mean that when the Messiah does come, the *Shekhinah* will voluntarily end the exile that she chose at the time of the destruction of the Temple of Jerusalem.

That the lost princess was intended to represent the *Shekhinah* was confirmed by Rabbi Nathan in his Introduction to Nachman's tales:

Behold, the first story about the king's daughter who is lost is the mystery of the *Shekhinah* in exile. . . . And this story is about every man in every time, for this entire story occurs to every man individually, for everyone of Israel must occupy himself with this *Tikkun*, namely to raise up the *Shekhinah* from her exile, to raise her up from the dust, and to liberate the Holy Kingdom from among the idolators and the Other Side among whom she has been caught. . . . Thus one finds that everyone in Israel is occupied with the search for the king's daughter, to take her back to her father, for Israel as a whole has the character of the minister who searches for her.

(*Sippur Maasiot*, pp. 7-8)

"The Lost Princess" also contains other hints of this kabbalistic allegory. The King's six sons and one daughter can be seen to represent the seven days of creation. It would be natural to identify the first six days in which the world was created as masculine, and the day of rest as feminine. In the Jewish view, of course, the seventh day is the Sabbath, and one of the identities of the *Shekhinah* is that of the Sabbath Queen.

8. On his deathbed Rabbi Nachman told his Hasidim that he would continue to be their rebbe even after his death and, therefore, a successor need not be appointed. His Hasidim have observed this request, although all other Hasidim traditionally appoint a new rebbe upon the death of the old one. For this reason the Bratslaver Hasidim are sometimes called "the Dead Hasidim." Two groups of Bratslaver Hasidim can be found in present-day Jerusalem, and a third group in B'nai Brak, outside of Tel Aviv. Every year, on the *yahrzeit* of Rabbi Nachman's death, his Hasidim read his tales out loud in an extended ceremony.

An even more disguised allegory is that of the three giants who rule over the animals, the winged creatures, and the winds, whom the minister encounters in his search for the lost princess. Each one carries a giant tree. In terms of the fairy tale, this detail merely serves to confirm their great size and strength. But to those familiar with kabbalistic allegory, the giants may be seen to represent *Adam Kadmon*, the primordial man whose creation serves as the transition from the unmanifested aspect of God known as *Ein Sof*, to the world as we know it. In that case, the tree which the giant holds would certainly refer to the kabbalistic Tree of Life, designating the stages in the process of emanation from non-existence to existence known as the ten *Sefirot*. The diagram of this Tree of Life is often found combined with a drawing of *Adam Kadmon*, and the two have been traditionally linked, since their meanings intersect. Both of these examples, that of the six sons and one daughter, and of the giants carrying a tree, demonstrate how well Rabbi Nachman was able to suggest esoteric Jewish concepts in the universal language of fairy tales. So well integrated are they that only one who is searching for the hidden meanings that Rabbi Nachman made abundantly clear did exist would consider them allegorically.

It is also apparent that Rabbi Nachman made use of common folk motifs in his tales, in part because he recognized the biblical archetypes glimmering beneath the surface of the traditional fairy tale, and had found a way to relate these folk motifs to his Hasidim by forcing them to consider them from the traditional Jewish perspective. He perceived that, in this way, his teaching would be revealed to them, but would remain concealed from others, who would be misled by the simple surface of the tales.

Even more obviously intended to serve as a commentary on *Maaseh Bereshith*, the Work of Creation — that is, the process by which the world came into being — is Rabbi Nachman's famous last tale, "The Seven Beggars." First, the overall structure of the story, with the tale of the seven beggars serving as a frame for other tales within tales, implies the seven days of creation. As in the biblical myth of creation, the seventh day and the seventh beggar are singled out for particular emphasis. The seventh day, of course, represents the Sabbath, while the seventh beggar may be seen as the representative of the Messianic era, if not of the Messiah himself. Note that the tales of the first six beggars are told, but that of the seventh beggar remains mysteriously untold, with the final observation by Rabbi Nathan that "Nor will we be worthy to hear it until the Messiah comes in his mercy, may he come speedily in our days, Amen."

It also seems likely that Nachman intended each of the beggars to represent one of the biblical patriarchs. Thus, the blind beggar represents Isaac, who was blind; the deaf beggar represents Abraham, who was deaf to the noise of the world, so intently did he concentrate on the Covenant between God and himself; the beggar with the crooked neck represents Aaron, brother of Moses and the first high priest of Israel — as the high

priest, his duty is to unite Israel and God, and his affliction focuses on the neck, which links the head (God) to the rest of the body (Israel); the hunchbacked beggar represents Jacob, whose deformity symbolizes the power of “the small which contains the great,” just as Jacob is identified in the Aggadah as the pillar that supports the entire world; the beggar with no hands represents Joseph, a master of the spiritual powers sometimes associated with the hands (keeping in mind that each beggar explains that he does not, in fact, suffer from his deformity, quite the opposite); and the seventh beggar, who has no feet, can be seen as the representative of the Messiah, who has not yet come — when he is about to arrive we will enter the era of the “footsteps of the Messiah.”

The clearest indication of the concern of this tale with *Maaseh Bereshith* comes in the tale of the blind beggar, who recounts a meeting of those whose memories reach back to the early phases of creation. One remembers “the moment when they plucked the apple from the branch;” the second recalls “the moment that the candle burned;” the third, the precise moment when the fruit was formed;” the fourth, “the moment that they extracted the seed to plant the fruit;” the fifth, “the wise men who discovered the seed;” the sixth, “the taste of the fruit before it entered the fruit;” the seventh, “the fragrance of the fruit before it entered the fruit;” and the eighth, “the appearance of the fruit before it attached itself to the fruit.” The beggar who is telling the story has a memory that reaches back even further, to “the time before there was anything — that is The Void.” In this sequence Nachman suggests the nine stages of emanation of the kabbalistic *Sefirot* that brought the world into being. The tenth stage goes unremarked because it is that of *Ein Sof*, that aspect of God which remains hidden and unknown from every man. These stages of emanation are the kabbalistic equivalent of the seven days of creation, although they are far more abstract and obscure. The fact that this tale within a tale is the first to be told emphasizes its role as an allegory about creation, and the importance of an understanding of the mysteries of creation, which are particularly difficult to comprehend.

Further kabbalistic allegories are to be found in the tales “The Portrait,” “The Royal Messenger,” “The Letter” and “The Tale of the Menorah.” The central symbol of “The Portrait” is clearly intended to designate the *Pargod*, the curtain referred to in kabbalistic literature, behind which the Holy One sits on His Throne of Glory. In the early *Hekhaloth* texts, describing journeys to Paradise, and in the latter kabbalistic texts, the *Pargod* is described in great detail. The side facing God is, of course, hidden, but the other side, facing the angels, into which all souls are said to be woven, has been described as a kind of archetypal screen on which flickers all of past and future destiny.

The primary purpose of the *Pargod* is to serve as a reminder that complete knowledge of the divinity is beyond the capacity of humans; they may travel so far, all the way into Paradise, but they can never probe

the mystery of God Himself. Not even the angels are permitted to know that aspect of God; only the *Shekhinah*, the Divine Presence and Bride of God, and the supreme angel, Metatron, are permitted behind the *Pargod*.

The kabbalistic concept of the *Shekhinah*, including its use in "The Lost Princess," converges with the archetypal symbolism of the collective unconscious, as proposed in the theories of C.G. Jung.⁹ These, then, are the same symbols that are largely repeated in world mythology, and commonly appear as dream symbols as well. From the first, these symbols have an eternal aspect which, by virtue of their role in the evolution of the Jewish religion, also have assumed particular characteristics of the religion.

In this way the ground was prepared for a full-scale allegorical reading of the Torah such as is found in the *Zohar*. There, every symbol is refined to reach its underlying archetype. The concept of the *Shekhinah*, for example, which dates from the talmudic era, was permitted to evolve until a myth had been formed about the Bride of God, whose particular concern is the destiny of Israel. This myth includes the separation of the *Shekhinah* from her spouse at the time of the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem, and thus links the destiny of Israel with that of the *Shekhinah*, since they will come out of exile at the same time.

This myth of the *Shekhinah* can easily be recognized, in Jungian terms, as an *anima* figure, as Jung called the symbolic feminine aspect of every man. (For women this symbolic figure is known as the *animus*.) This is that part of the psyche that must be integrated in order to achieve wholeness, or what Jung calls Individuation. This also is the symbolic inner figure identified as the elusive muse who is sought after by generations of poets, whom Robert Graves calls "the White Goddess." In Jungian terms, the exile of the *Shekhinah* might, therefore, be seen as a psychic dislocation of the Jewish nation, brought about by their exile from the Promised Land. And there are many Jews, Zionists in particular, who firmly believe that Jews can find peace of mind only by making their home in the Land of Israel.

Rabbi Nachman's ability to integrate kabbalistic concepts into the straight-forward and essentially simple fairy tale narrative was possible because Nachman seemed to comprehend instinctively the personal psychic dimensions of both modes. He seems to have recognized how each mode has its source in the inner world and its own laws, which are quite independent of those of the "real" world. Furthermore, he seems to have understood, as have psychologists since Jung, the nature of the psychological process of projection. Certainly, for this kind of literature to succeed it is necessary for the author to descend, somehow, into his unconscious, and to report back the mythic and archetypal drama as it is reflected there. Nachman perceived, for example, that the exile of the *Shekhinah* con-

9. See Jung, *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*, vol. 9 of *The Collected Works of C.G. Jung*.

cerned him in the most personal way possible. The *Shekhinah* was not only lost to Israel as a whole, but also to him individually, and it was possible and necessary to set off on the quest to restore her to her former position of glory. The quest described in "The Lost Princess," then, is not just a fairy tale quest, or an allegory of the exile of the *Shekhinah* (although it is both), but must be understood as a mirror of a crucial drama of the psyche. The ability of Nachman to personalize these mythic elements of Judaism by transmuting them into the universal language of fairy tales was a bold act with profound implications.

This suggests the process by which the myth of the *Shekhinah* evolved in the first place, and one possible approach of the modern reader to a literature making use of such symbolic figures. Starting with a psychic truth, such as the existence of the *anima*, the Jewish myth projects the presence of such a figure who is as concerned with her people as a whole as a man's own *anima* is concerned with his spiritual and emotional life. The modern reader might then be well advised to attempt to relate to his or her own psychic reality the mythological projections that were the starting points of this mythology in the first place. This is not an intellectual process, but a spiritual and emotional one. What it requires, above all, is that the reader be open to the psychic truths that serve as the foundation for the entire aggadic tradition. Then the mythology that finds its first expression in the Bible and is cultivated throughout all subsequent Jewish literature will once again exercise its compelling power, making possible a personal contact not only to the tradition itself, but also to all the generations that have received and transmitted it until this time.

This link between kabbalistic thinking and the theory of archetypal symbolism as proposed by Jung is strongly prefigured in Rabbi Nachman's tale "The Portrait." The concept of the archetype is itself clearly defined here:

Now there is a country that contains within it all countries. And in that country there is a city that contains all the cities of that country that contains all countries. And in that city there is a house that contains all houses of that city that contains all the cities of that country that contains all countries. And in that house is a man who bears within him all of this.

In "The Portrait," the king represents, of course, the Holy One who "is hidden from men. He sits behind a curtain and is far from the people of his land." This king's distance, which has the effect of causing distortions of the truth among his people, is a source of mystery and confusion. No one possesses the portrait of this king because it is impossible to obtain. Yet, paradoxically, at the end of the tale "the face of the king was revealed, and the wise men saw him." This does not mean to imply that the most hidden and recondite secrets of the divine will be revealed to those who steep themselves in the mysteries of the Kabbalah, but, rather, that immersion in these mysteries makes possible a knowledge about the divinity that was previously impossible among men.

The key revelation is that the king "cannot bear the lies of the kingdom." God is pained by falsehood and imperfection in the world, although, ironically, it exists because of His distance from His Creation. This paradox, which cannot be resolved simply, is at the core of Nachman's complex vision of existence, and of the central kabbalistic vision itself, in which the further the distance from *Ein Sof*, the hidden aspect of God, the further from the source of truth itself, and the greater the distortions that come into being.

At the end of Rabbi Nachman's tale, "The Spider and the Fly," there is another passage which defines, for all practical purposes, the inexhaustible aspect of the archetype (symbolized by the image worn by the maiden), and the fact that it is essentially independent of the vessel through which it expresses itself:

He saw that among the myriads of prisoners he had taken there was a beautiful maiden. The maiden possessed every loveliness that was to be found on earth, the beauty of form that was felt as sweet water under the fingers, the beauty of the eyes that was as a caress of the hands, and the beauty that is heard like the sound of bells touched by the wind. But when the king looked upon her, he saw that her beauty was not her own, but that it came forth like a perfume out of the tiny image that she wore upon herself. And it was this image that contained all forms of beauty, and because it was upon her, it seemed that all those forms of beauty were her own.

The tale, "The Royal Messenger," is focused on the question of the existence of God: "The king had sent a letter to a wise but skeptical man, who, in his faraway province, refused to accept it." The quest to the end of the world to discover if the king actually exists represents the extensive Kabbalistic quest for knowledge of the Divinity. Despite evidence of the greatness of the king, the skeptical man remains unsatisfied that proof of the king's existence has been given.

This tale is enhanced by comparison with Nachman's tale, "The Letter," an allegory about a prince who receives a letter and recognizes the handwriting of his father, the king. Also related is "The Portrait," previously discussed, about the king who lives behind a curtain and thus cannot be seen. In these two tales, the non-appearance of the king is not a source for skepticism about his existence, but in "The Royal Messenger" the difficulty of accepting the paradox of a God who must remain hidden, and thus ultimately unknown, is presented in its most powerful form, with the skeptic receiving the final word.

Both "The Royal Messenger" and "The Letter" have a remarkable parallel to Franz Kafka's famous parable, "An Imperial Message," which they preceded by more than a hundred years. In Kafka's parable an emperor gives his death-bed message to his faithful messenger to deliver "to you, the humble subject, the insignificant shadow cowering in the remotest distance before the Imperial sun; the Emperor from his

deathbed has sent a message to you alone.” Due to insurmountable obstacles, it becomes impossible for the message to be delivered, so that the reader remains uncertain whether the message actually has been sent; whether, indeed, the Emperor, the messenger and the message even exist, or whether the “humble subject” has merely daydreamed the whole incident.

In Kafka’s parable, as well as those of Rabbi Nachman, one likely meaning is that which proposes that the Emperor or King is intended to represent God. The letter sent may be identified as the Torah, containing all truth, or as the very existence of the world around us. In Kafka’s parable the “humble subject” deeply believes in the existence of the letter and, that, but for the obstacles, “If (the messenger) could reach the open fields how fast he would fly, and soon doubtless you would hear the welcome hammering of his fists on your door.” In Nachman’s “The Royal Messenger,” on the other hand, the letter arrives, but the recipient pays no attention to its contents, concerning himself instead solely with the question of the existence of the author of the letter. We suspect that Kafka’s peasant would not have been assailed by these doubts! But the most fortunate of all is the prince in “The Letter” who recognizes the handwriting of his father, i.e., the *Tzaddik* who recognizes the Creator through His creation. Thus, in these three parables, the essence of the world view ranges from total belief in the existence of God the Creator (“The Letter”), to belief in God’s existence but the inability to receive the message sent by God to man (“An Imperial Message”), to doubt in the existence of the Creator, despite evidence to the contrary (“The Royal Messenger”). These parables can be seen to represent, respectively, the views of the believers (“The Letter”), the religious existentialists (“An Imperial Message”), and the atheists (“The Royal Messenger”).

In general, Rabbi Nachman’s view is closest to that held by the prince in “The Letter” — he has recognized the Creator and His creation. It is natural, then, that the key figure reappearing in Nachman’s tales is the *Tzaddik*, the spiritual guide that every rebbe sought to be to his Hasidim. Certainly the central figure of the Master of Prayer in the story of the same title is clearly intended to be such a *Tzaddik*. It is the clarity of vision of the Master of Prayer that enables the initial confusion of the world in this tale to be eventually overcome. Similarly, the tale, “Harvest of Madness,” emphasizes the necessity that the *Tzaddik* retain his clarity of vision even if he seems to be mad in the eyes of the world. Here the king and his counselor are the only ones who are spared by the general madness that is brought on by the harvest, which, because it is so extensive is virtually unavoidable. This tale of Nachman’s is identical in theme to a Sufi folktale collected by Idries Shah in *Tales of the Dervishes*.¹⁰ The only difference is that in the Sufi tale the madness is carried by water, rather than wheat. The Sufi tale, which Shah calls “When the Waters were Changed,” con-

10. Idries Shah, *Tales of the Dervishes*, p. 21.

cerns a warning given that on a certain date all the waters in the world which had not been specially preserved would disappear, to be replaced by different water, which would drive men mad. Only one man listens to this warning and stores water for himself. And when the waters stop flowing and then begin to flow again, he finds that men have begun to think in an entirely different way, and have lost their memories of what had happened. They regard this last sane man as mad, and the resulting isolation leads him, eventually, to drink from the new water, despite the consequences, because he cannot bear the loneliness of being different from everyone else. After he does drink of their water he becomes like everyone else, and they regard him as a madman who has been restored to his sanity.

Another tale dealing with madness and sanity is "The Prince Who Thought He was a Rooster." Here a prince who has been given up as mad is finally restored to sanity by the action of the wise man who pretends to share his madness and, gaining his confidence in this way, eventually influences him to function again as a human being. In his own comment on this tale Rabbi Nachman makes it clear that the story is intended as an allegory of the role of the *Tzaddik*, who must be prepared to descend to the level of those whom he hopes to influence: "In this way must the genuine teacher go down to the level of his people if he wishes to raise them up to their proper place."

A further kabbalistic allegory is found in Nachman's "The Tale of the Menorah," which illustrates the central kabbalistic concept of *Tikkun*, of redemption and restoration. This concept is an integral part of Isaac Luria's cosmological theory about the Shattering the Vessels and the Gathering of the Sparks. *Tikkun* is identical to the process of Gathering the Sparks — of bringing together that which has been scattered, and restoring that which has been broken.

In Rabbi Nachman's tale the son constructs his *menorah* out of the defects of those who observe it. We may assume that the craftsman was familiar with those before whom he demonstrated his skills. The primary purpose of the *menorah* in this tale is to make these others aware of their own defects, since this awareness is the first and most essential step before the act of *Tikkun* can take place. In this way the *menorah* serves symbolically as the *Tzaddik* should serve his Hasidim — making them aware of their defects so that they can begin the process of *Tikkun*. This reading of the tale can be summarized in the Talmudic phrase, "Anyone who finds a flaw finds his own flaw."¹¹

Rabbi Zalman Schachter, however, suggests another way to approach this tale. His view can be summed up in what might be called "The Tale of the Opal." An opal's most distinguishing feature is the fire in its center, but this fire is also its flaw. When seen from one angle, the fire resembles nothing more than a crack, but from another perspective it is the most

11. B. *Kid.* 70a.

beautiful part of the opal. Thus, what appears to be the defect in the *menorah* is what makes it unique and more beautiful. Rabbi Schachter feels that this interpretation, which emphasizes Rabbi Nachman's belief in the essential polarity of existence, preserves the complexity of his vision.

The craftsman who creates the *menorah* may also be seen to represent God, while the *menorah* is God's creation, the world. In such a reading, the seven branches of the *menorah* may be seen as the seven days of creation described in Gen. 1:1-2:4. In this case, the light of the flames of the *menorah* can be identified with the primordial light that came into existence on the first day, when God said *Let there be light, and there was light* (Gen. 1:3), and was present until the creation of the sun and moon on the fourth day (Gen. 1:14-19).¹² If this tale is read as an allegory of the creation of the world, Nachman may be seen to be saying that the defects are the defects of this world and that God created the world out of the defects in it. Nor does this conflict with the traditional view of creation, since *God formed man out of the dust of the earth* (Gen. 2:6).

It is interesting to note that Rabbi Nachman, as well as being a forerunner of the modern Jewish literary tradition, was also one of the very last great figures in the oral tradition. For him, the *maaseh* could only be told orally, but, fortunately, these tales have been preserved because he was blessed with a highly responsible *sopher*, or scribe, Rabbi Nathan (Nussan) of Nemerov. It is as if Rabbi Nachman's soul had its source in the oral tradition, while Rabbi Nathan's derived from the written, for their mutual effort was required in order to bring Rabbi Nachman's tales back from the highest heavens, where his Hasidim believed that he received them.

That Rabbi Nachman was willing to permit his tales to undergo the folk process in which the tale is never told twice in exactly the same fashion is apparent by his decision, on occasion, to tell the tales on a Friday night, the start of the Sabbath. During the Sabbath, of course, the ban against writing was in effect, and it was therefore necessary for Nachman's Hasidim to retell the tale among themselves many times in order not to lose any of it, until the Sabbath came to an end. Only then could Nathan write down the tale, already likely to have undergone the process of recasting that naturally occurs with every retelling.

That the Bratslav Hasidim believed that Rabbi Nachman had the stature of the ancient patriarchs and prophets, and that his storytelling

12. Reference to the origin of this primordial light is found in *Genesis Rabbah* (3:4): "Rabbi Simeon ben Jehozadak asked Rabbi Samuel ben Nachman: 'As I have heard that you are a master of *aggadah*, tell me from what the primordial light was created?' He replied: 'The Holy One, blessed be He, wrapped Himself therein as in a robe and radiated with the lustre of His majesty from one end of the world to the other.'" This metaphor is developed further in *Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer* 3: "Whence were the heavens created? From the light of the garment with which He was robed. He took this light and stretched it as it is written, *Who coverest thyself with light as with a garment, who stretched out the heavens like a curtain*" (Ps. 104:2.)

was a continuation of an unbroken tradition, is demonstrated in this remarkable prayer, which they invoked before the telling of tales:

Master of the Universe, Thou workest wonders in every generation through the true *Tzaddikim* of every generation, as our fathers have related to us, all the great deeds and wonders and great miracles that Thou hast performed in each generation through Thy true *Tzaddikim* from the beginning of time unto this day. In this generation too there are of certainty *Tzaddikim* and true wonder-workers. Therefore mayest Thou in Thine abundant mercy grant and help me and strengthen and animate me so that I may be worthy to tell the tales of the true *Tzaddikim*, of all that happened to them in their days, both to them and their children, and all the great and awe-inspiring wonders and signs which they performed both in secret and in public, and all the holiness and revelation of God which they effected in the world; all this may I merit to hear well with my ears and heart, and meditate and always retell them.¹³

All in all, Rabbi Nachman told thirteen primary tales¹⁴ which are those most frequently included in the various editions of his stories. In addition there are a number of brief, lesser known tales including "Harvest of Madness," "The Royal Messenger," "A Letter" and "The Prince Who Thought He was a Rooster," previously discussed.

Before his death, Rabbi Nachman directed his Hasidim to burn all of his writings. (His tales, told orally and recorded by his scribe, Rabbi Nathan, were exempted from this order.) His first disciple, Simeon (Shimon), carried out this order directly after Nachman's death, as Rabbi Nathan describes with obvious distress:

Before Rabbi Nachman departed from this world, he left instructions to burn all his writings which, secreted in a special box, no one had been permitted to read. Immediately after his soul left him and his clothes were being removed, Rabbi Simeon hastened to open the box, took out all the hidden manuscripts, carried them to the stove, built a fire, and consigned them to the flames. I followed after him, in order to sniff the sacred fumes of the awesome Torah whose enjoyment was denied to our generation.¹⁵

(*Yeme Maharnat*)

13. Koppel S. Pinson, "The Poetry of Hassidism," *The Menorah Journal*, (Autumn 1941): 304.

14. These are: "The Lost Princess," "The Broken Betrothal," "The Cripple," "The Bull and the Ram," "The Prince Who Was Made Entirely of Precious Stones," "The Spider and the Fly," "The Rabbi's Son," "The Sage and the Simpleton," "The King's Son and the Servant's Son," "The Portrait," and "The Burger and the Beggar." All thirteen are found only in the *The Thirteen Stories of Rebbe Nachman of Breslev*, among the English language editions.

15. The parallel of this episode with that of Franz Kafka is remarkable and noteworthy. On his deathbed Kafka directed his friend and mentor, Max Brod, to burn all his unpublished writings — novels, stories, journals, diaries and letters. Brod gave his word, and then promptly published all of this material, which resulted in Kafka's being acclaimed as one of the seminal figures of 20th century literature. Had Brod followed Kafka's expressed wish, as Rabbi Simeon did for Rabbi Nachman, Kafka would probably be known, if at all, as an obscure Czech writer who published only a handful of stories in his lifetime and left no other legacy. One of the first articles to bring attention to the parallels between Kafka and Rabbi Nachman was "Franz Kafka and Rabbi Nachman" by Jack Riemer, *Jewish Frontier*, (Fall, 1961).

After Rabbi Nachman's death the impact of his tales rapidly emerged from the limited circle of Bratslaver Hasidim to the world at large. This was due, in part, to the universal appeal of the tales, and in part because Nachman himself came to be recognized as the most charismatic Hasidic figure since the Baal Shem; the fact that he was the Baal Shem's great-grandson only emphasized this link.¹⁶ Because Nachman had chosen to tell his tales in Yiddish (although Nathan, his scribe, later translated them into Hebrew, and the traditional text includes both languages), he had a significant influence on the modern Yiddish literary tradition. For with the model of Nachman's broad acceptance in Yiddish to support them, the formative figures of modern Yiddish literature, especially Sholom Aleichem and I.L. Peretz, had the confidence to write in their native tongue. And because their stories were published in the widely circulated Yiddish newspapers of Eastern Europe and Russia, they soon possessed an enviable following among Yiddish-speaking Jews.

The wide currency of Nachman's tale also proved influential in other direct and indirect ways. Nachman's style was the direct model for Yiddish writers such as Der Nister and Dovid Ignatow.¹⁷ But, more importantly, the break that Nachman had made with the past by the mere telling of his allegorical fairy tales created an atmosphere in which it was possible to approach the sacred literatures from a consciously literary perspective. It is hard to imagine the career of I.L. Peretz, for example, without the existence of Nachman as his predecessor. Peretz was aware, of course, that Nachman had been the first to utilize folklore in a literary creation. Peretz himself made good use of the folktales that his friend, S. Ansky, author of *The Dybbuk*, gathered in his capacity as one of the first collectors of Jewish folklore.

Above all, it was Rabbi Nachman's ability to sustain a mythological vision of existence "at the meeting place between the truth of the soul and the truth of the cosmos," as Arthur Green states in his exemplary biography of Nachman, *Tormented Master*,¹⁸ that has served to inspire subsequent Jewish authors. For Nachman had an intuitive ability to enter into the world of the sacred and to discover the secrets by which a mythic kingdom could be made to flourish. That secret he has succeeded in transmitting to his successors who have acknowledged his role as progenitor, and have sought, in turn, to keep alive the Jewish literary tradition.

16. All of his life Rabbi Nachman was obsessed with the Baal Shem, and as a child he spent many hours praying on the grave of the Baal Shem in Medzibosh. See Green, *Tormented Master*, p. 28.

17. A long Nachman-like tale by Der Nister, called "A Tale of Kings," can be found in *Yenne Velt: The Great Works of Jewish Fantasy and the Occult*, edited and translated by Joachim Neugroschel. Ignatow published a novel, *The Hidden Light*, which has not yet been translated from Yiddish, that is based entirely on Nachman's tale, "The Seven Beggars."

18. Green, *Tormented Master*, p. 347.

The Tale of the Menorah

RABBI NACHMAN OF BRATSLAV

Translated from the Hebrew sources by Tsila and Howard Schwartz

Once a young man left his home and travelled for several years. Afterwards, when he returned home, he proudly told his father that he had become a master in the craft of making *menorahs*. He asked his 'ather to call together all those who practiced this craft, that he might demonstrate his unrivaled skill for them.

That is what his father did, inviting to their home all those who practiced this craft in that town. But when his son presented the *menorah* he had made to them, not everyone found it pleasing in their sight. Then his father went to each and every one and begged them to tell him the truth about what they thought of it. And at last each one admitted that he found a defect in the *menorah*.

Then the father reported to his son that the *menorah* was not pleasing in the eyes of everyone, and that many of the craftsmen had noted a defect. To this the son asked to know what was the defect the craftsmen had found, and it emerged that each of them had noted a different defect. And it was true that what one craftsman had praised, another had found defective; nor did they agree on what was the defect in the *menorah*, and what was the most beautiful aspect of it.

And the son said to his father: "By this have I shown my great skill. For I have revealed to each one his own defect, since each of these defects was actually in him who perceived it. It was these defects that I incorporated into my creation, for I made this *menorah* only from defects. Now I will begin its restoration."

The Lost Princess

RABBI NACHMAN OF BRATSLAV

Retold by Howard Schwartz

Once there was a king who had six sons and one daughter. His daughter was very dear to him, but one day when he was with her he became angry for a moment, and an evil word escaped his lips. That night the princess went to her chamber to sleep, but in the morning she was not anywhere to be found. And when her father,

the king, realized she was missing, he was filled with sorrow and remorse, and he began to search for her everywhere. Then the king's minister, seeing the king's sorrow, asked to be given a servant and a horse and enough silver for expenses, in order that he might undertake the search.

So it was that the minister travelled through all of the kingdom in search of the lost princess, across deserts and fields and through forests and swamps. He searched for her for many years. And one day, as he was travelling in a desert, he glimpsed a path he had never seen, and he said to himself: "Since I have been searching for the princess in this desert such a long time, perhaps I shall follow this path and come to a city." After following the path for a great distance, he finally arrived at a splendid palace, guarded by many soldiers. Now the minister was afraid the guards would not let him enter, but still he dismounted and walked towards the palace, and to his surprise the gatekeeper opened the gate for him at once, without asking him any questions. From there he passed from the courtyard into the palace, and there he entered the chamber of the king who commanded all the troops. Nor did anyone try to stop him from entering into the presence of the king. There many musicians who were conducted by the king played their instruments. And the minister stood off in a corner of the royal chamber, and waited to see what would happen. After a while the king commanded his servants to bring the queen there. They left with great rejoicing, and the musicians sang and played as she entered the room. And when they led her to the throne, the minister saw that she was the lost daughter of the king.

Before long the queen looked up and saw him in the corner of the chamber and recognized him at once. She rose from her throne and said: "Do you recognize me?" And he replied: "Yes, you are the lost princess, but how did you come to be here?" And she answered: "Because of that evil word that escaped from the mouth of my father. For this is the palace of the Evil One." Then the minister told her that her father, the king, was very sad in her absence, and that he had sent the minister to find her, and that he had been searching for many years. Then he asked her: "How can I take you away from here?" She replied: "It is not possible to free me until you dwell in one place for a year, and throughout that year yearn to set me free. And on the last day of that year you must fast, and not sleep for a full day and night."

Then the minister left that place and did as she said. He went to a forest and made his home there. And at the end of the year, on the last day, he fasted and did not sleep. But that day he saw for the first time a tree on which very beautiful apples grew. He desired them very much, and finally rose and ate of the tree. But as soon as he ate, he fell down and sleep snatched him away. He slept for a very long time, and, although his servant shook him, he could not wake him up.

When at last the minister woke from his sleep, he asked his servant: "Where am I?" And the servant told him: "You are in a forest, where you have been sleeping a very long time, several years, and all that time I sustained myself from nuts and fruits." The minister despaired, but found his way back to the palace of the lost princess, and there he met her again in the chamber of the king. And when she saw him she was filled with sadness and said: "Had you come on that day, you could have taken me away from here, but because of that one day all has been lost. Still, I

understand that fasting is very difficult, especially on the last day, for then the Evil Inclination becomes most powerful. Therefore return and dwell again for another year, but on the last day you are permitted to eat. However, do not sleep, and do not drink any wine, lest you sleep, for it is important, above all, to remain awake."

Then he went and did as she said. And on the last day of the long year he saw for the first time a spring whose waters were reddish, and whose smell was that of wine. He pointed out the spring to his servant, then he went and tasted of its waters, only to fall asleep again, and this time he slept for seventy years. Near the end of that time many soldiers passed by, and the servant of the minister concealed himself. And after the troops had passed, a carriage came by, in which sat the daughter of the king. As soon as she recognized him, she left the carriage and approached him. And although she shook him very strongly, he did not wake up, and she began to lament, saying that he had made such a long effort, and suffered for so many years to free her, and because of one error on that last day, he lost everything. She wept greatly over this, and then took the kerchief from her head and wrote a message on it with her tears. Then she returned to her carriage and drove away.

Not long afterwards he woke up and asked his servant: "Where am I?" The servant told him all that had happened, about the troops that had passed by there, and the carriage that had stopped, and how the lost princess had tried so hard to wake him up. Then the minister saw the kerchief and asked: "Whence did this come?" And the servant told him that the lost princess had written on it with her tears. So the minister took it and lifted it up towards the sun. There it was written that she was no longer to be found in the palace, but from then on would make her home in a palace of pearls upon a golden mountain, and that it was there that he would find her.

So the minister left his servant, and went off alone to search for her. He searched for several years. Finally he decided that such a palace of pearls could not be found in any inhabited place, for by then he knew well the map of the world. Therefore he decided to search for her in the desert, and after searching for many years he encountered a huge giant who was carrying an enormous tree as his staff. The giant asked him who he was, and when he replied that he was a man, the giant said: "I have been in this desert a long time and have never before encountered a man in this place." Then the minister told him the whole story of the princess, and that he was searching for a palace of pearls upon a golden mountain. But the giant said that surely such a thing did not exist. But the minister began to weep, and he insisted that it must surely exist *somewhere*. And at last the giant said: "Since you are so certain, I shall call all the animals which are in my charge, for they run about the whole world. Perhaps one of them will know about a palace of pearls." Then he called all the animals, from the smallest to the largest, of every kind, and asked them all what they might know, but not one of them had seen any such thing. Then the giant said: "You see, they have confirmed that your quest is nonsense. Listen to me and turn back, for surely you cannot find what does not exist." But the man insisted it must exist. So the giant said to him: "Behold, further in the desert lives my brother, who is in charge of all the birds. Perhaps they will know where to find it, since they fly high in the air. Go to him and tell him that I have sent you."

Then the man walked many years, seeking the second giant. At last he encoun-

tered him, also carrying a great tree for a staff, and he told him about his quest. But this giant also put him off, insisting that such a thing could not be. But when the man refused to give up, the giant said: "Behold, I am in charge of all the birds. I shall call them together, and perhaps they will know." So all the birds were called, each and every one, from the smallest to the largest, and they each replied that they did not know of any such palace of pearls. Then the giant said to him: "Now you must surely see that your quest is folly. Listen to me and turn back, for surely such a palace is not to be found in this world." But the minister would not abandon his quest, and at last the giant said to him: "Still further in the desert lives my brother who is in charge of the winds, and they cross the world back and forth every day. Perhaps they will know."

Then the man walked for many years, searching for that giant. At last he encountered him carrying a tree, and told him the whole story. And although he, too, tried to put him off, the minister at last convinced him to call all the winds together for his sake, so that he could ask them what they might know. The giant called all the winds to come there, and when they arrived he asked them all, but none of them knew about a palace of pearls on a golden mountain. Then the giant turned to him and said: "You see, you have been searching for something that does not exist." And the man began to weep and said: "I am still certain it can be found in this world." Meanwhile, one last wind arrived, and the giant was angry with it and said: "Why did you come so late? Did I not command that all the winds in the world should come here? Why did you not come with the others?" And the wind answered that he had been held up because he had to bear the daughter of a king to a palace of pearls on a golden mountain. And when he heard this the minister rejoiced. Then the giant asked the wind: "Are things expensive there?" And the wind replied that all things were very dear. And the giant in charge of the winds said to the minister: "You have been searching for such a long time, and you have had so many difficulties. Now perhaps you will be hindered by lack of gold. Therefore I shall give you a pouch into which you can dip your hand, and there you will always find golden coins, as many as you will ever need." And he gave him the pouch, and commanded the wind to bring him to that place. And the wind carried him there, and brought him to the gate. There stood many guards who refused to let him enter. But he dipped his hand into the jar and took out gold coins and bribed them, and managed to enter the city after all. And then he went and bought himself food, for he had to tarry there, since it required much thought and wisdom to set the princess free. And how he set her free Rabbi Nachman did not reveal, but in the end he did take her out of the city, and restored her to the palace of her father the king.

Walter Kaufmann's Mismeeting with Martin Buber

MAURICE FRIEDMAN

WALTER KAUFMANN'S ASSESSMENT OF MARTIN Buber's triumphs and failures in the May 1979 issue of *ENCOUNTER* discloses to the discerning eye Kaufmann's uneasy ambivalence and his almost tragic mismeeting with the person whom he salutes at the end of his essay in the words of Horatio's eulogy of Hamlet, "He was a man, take him for all in all. / I shall not look on his like again."¹

This ambivalence was already plainly in evidence at our first meeting in the summer of 1955 when we were both teaching at Columbia University. We were drawn together by a common interest in Nietzsche and Buber. Kaufmann had drawn on Buber in his classic book on Nietzsche, and I had stressed Nietzsche's influence on Buber in my *Martin Buber: The Life of Dialogue*.¹ Kaufmann told me he was translating a study of Judaism and Christianity by that noble German-Jewish rabbi, Leo Baeck, whom he preferred to Buber, because Baeck was humbler. Yet, at this very time, Kaufmann recommended to Paul Arthur Schilpp that there should be a *Philosophy of Martin Buber* volume in Schilpp's *Library of Living Philosophers*, and he soon was to include Buber's little classic, *The Way of Man*, in his anthology, *Religion from Tolstoy to Camus*.

Kaufmann's correspondence with Buber had already begun some years before. In 1949 he sent Buber an article on "Nietzsche's Admiration for Socrates"² which Buber praised in his reply as written with understanding and real knowledge. "But I believe more should be done to answer the question — *why this ambivalence*" (italics mine).

One could, for example, show that Nietzsche wanted to be a Socratic man and that he did not succeed because he lacked the immediacy of human relationships; and then that "Socrates" means devotion to the eternal values since one asks concerning them and accepts none as already formulated; whereas Nietzsche more and more despaired of his capacity to grasp the eternal values until he came through this despair even to deny their presence and to proclaim in their place "new" values, which, in fact, were no values at all. The two motifs could, in my opinion, even be demonstrated to

1. Maurice S. Friedman, *Martin Buber: The Life of Dialogue*, 3rd ed. with new Preface and new Bibliography (London and Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, Phoenix Books, 1976).

2. *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. IX, (1948): 472 ff.

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be ultimately one; for the living reality of eternal values is given to man only in the immediacy of relationship.³

Kaufmann's ambivalence toward Buber is well-documented in his own writings. In the Introductory Essay to his anthology, *Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre*⁴, Kaufmann explained his omission of the religious existentialists such as Berdyaev, Buber, Bultmann, Tillich, and Marcel, first, on the ground that "religion has always been existentialist" (which seems to be more a reason for *including* them, as I have in my own critical reader, *The Worlds of Existentialism*⁵); second, on the palpably false ground that "not one of the later religious existentialists has so far left a mark, like Kierkegaard, on literature or on philosophy"; and third, on the rather whimsical note that an anthology "is not a collection of flowers or a meadow on which we pick a blossom here and there" but "an attempt to tell a story and follow a path." "The religious existentialists have not played an important part in our story," he added — an inevitable conclusion since he had arbitrarily shaped his story to exclude all of them but Kierkegaard.

But in his essay on "Buber's Religious Significance" in *The Philosophy of Martin Buber*, Kaufmann, in utmost contrast, systematically attacked Kierkegaard, Jaspers, Heidegger, and Sartre — the very figures who occupy the central place in his anthology:

If we find the heart of existentialism in the protest against systems, concepts, and abstractions, coupled with a resolve to remain faithful to concrete experience and above all to the challenge of human existence — should we not find in that case that Kierkegaard and Jaspers, Heidegger and Sartre had all betrayed their own central resolve? That they had all become enmeshed in sticky webs of dialectic that impeded communication? that the high abstractness of their idiom and their strange addiction to outlandish concepts far surpassed the same faults in Descartes or Plato? that not one of them was able any more to listen to the challenge of another human reality as it has found expression in a text? and that their writings have, without exception become monologues?⁶

After this devastating judgment, Kaufmann ended his essay with the amazing conclusion that "in reality there is only one existentialist, and he is no existentialist, but Martin Buber."!!

3. Martin Buber, *Briefwechsel aus sieben Jahrzehnten*, ed. & introduced by Grete Schaeder, Vol. III: 1938-1965 (Heidelberg: Verlag Lambert Schneider, 1975), #153. Martin Buber to Walter Kaufmann, Jerusalem, February 27, 1949, p. 191 f.

4. Walter Kaufmann, *Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre* (New York: Meridian Books, 1956), p. 49 f.

5. *The Worlds of Existentialism: A Critical Reader*, ed. with Introductions and a Conclusion by Maurice Friedman, 2nd ed. (London and Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, Phoenix Books, 1973).

6. Walter Kaufmann, "Buber's Religious Significance" in Paul Arthur Schilpp and Maurice Friedman, eds. *The Philosophy of Martin Buber* volume of *The Library of Living Philosophers* (Cambridge, England: The Cambridge University Press; Lasalle, Illinois: The Open Court Publishing Co., 1967), p. 685.

In this same essay Kaufmann said of Buber's *Tales of the Hasidim* that they are definitive in their simplicity. "It was Buber who cut these diamonds . . . he achieved perfection by cutting." Kaufmann contrasted Buber's courage in daring to end a story at the right point with the ineptitude of the author of the Gospel according to St. Luke who sets the sayings that are found in Matthew in inferior settings. In *The Tales of the Hasidim* "Buber presents gem upon gem without mounting each in a setting of inferior quality. Buber's stories cannot be improved by cutting. That is more than one can say of the art of any of the four evangelists." Kaufmann is aware that many might regard what he is saying as blasphemous, but he sticks to his guns, even dismissing the criticism that Buber is not an impartial historian because of the religious significance of what Buber has given us:

What saves Buber's work is its perfection. He has given us one of the great religious books of all time, a work that invites comparison with the great Scriptures of mankind. . . . These stories will surely be remembered widely when the theologians of our time have gone the way of Harnack and Schleiermacher, not to mention lesser names that have long been forgotten by all but specialists.⁷

These affirmations Kaufmann reaffirms in brief in his summation of Buber's triumphs and failures in ENCOUNTER though he falls rather too easily into the currently popular notion that "it is now widely acknowledged that Buber's portrait of Hasidim does not stand up under scholarly scrutiny." He is, of course, referring to Gershom Scholem's well-known essay on Buber's interpretation of Hasidism which concludes: "If we want to understand the real phenomenon of Hasidism, . . . we shall have to start again from the beginning." Actually, Scholem's corrective to Buber is as one-sided as what he sets out to correct. The real heart of the divergence between Scholem and Buber is that Scholem writes as an intellectual historian who identifies the "real doctrines" of Hasidism with its theoretical teachings and treats them as the primary source for what Hasidic legends and sayings "really meant." Buber, in contrast, saw himself as a filter of Hasidic life and teaching for the needs of faith of our age of the "eclipse of God." In the original version of his ENCOUNTER article, which was a speech that he gave at the Buber centennial conferences in Israel and New York, Kaufmann aptly quipped, "If Scholem was Joshua, Buber was Moses." The value of Scholem's scholarly contributions for the generations to come is incontestable. But if anything in this analogy could be regarded by Jew and non-Jew alike as "the promised Land," it would not be Scholem's destruction of the Jericho-walls of all previous scholarship on the Kabbalah but Buber's *Tales of the Hasidim*, *For the Sake of Heaven*, and *The Way of Man!*

The heart of Kaufmann's article, however, is the assertion that

7. Ibid., pp. 678-81.

Buber's claim as a philosopher stands and falls on *I and Thou*, and that *I and Thou* is "seriously flawed" in its style, in its authenticity and, above all, in the Manichean dualism that it postulates between the I-Thou and I-It. The style of *I and Thou*, like that of the works by Heidegger, Rilke, and other writers of the time, is inauthentic, writes Kaufmann — a curious position for a translator who wrote a forty-page prologue for his translation of *I and Thou* in pseudo-*I and Thou* style and format! This prologue and the elaborate scholarly footnotes get in between the reader and the text. The text itself is heavy and Germanic and, in most cases, altogether lacking in the poetic quality that the brilliant young English theologian, Ronald Gregor Smith, captured after he spent weeks with Buber and his friends in 1937. Some inaccuracies, to be sure, are remedied, and for this we can be grateful. But Kaufmann's rendering of key terms, as well as of many crucial passages, seems to me unfortunate.

Kaufmann has rendered *Umkehr* as "return," thereby losing the whole dynamic of *teshuvah* or the turning, a central concept and call of the biblical prophets to turn back with one's whole existence to the dialogue with God. Although Buber's term, *Begegnung*, was introduced into English as "encounter" through the English version of Emil Bruner's *Divine-Human Encounter (Wahrheit als Begegnung)*, Buber and I always strongly preferred "meeting," and it is thus that Smith translated this central term in his *I and Thou*. "Encounter" suggests "confrontation." Indeed, I cannot help thinking that if Kaufmann had had my experience, in the sixties, of leading "encounter groups," he would never have used this term as the equivalent to the openness and mutuality that Buber wished to indicate by *Begegnung*!

Kaufmann's translation of *Du* as "You" instead of "Thou," as Smith and Kaufmann's *title* both have it, is, I would grant, a moot point. Kaufmann has done a real service in trying to correct the tendency to regard the "I-Thou relationship" as exclusively or mainly between man and God — the result of its being introduced into the English-speaking world first through Neo-Orthodox Protestant theologians — and restoring the primordially Jewish recognition, and that of Jesus, that the love of God cannot be separated from the love of one's neighbor. Asked as to what he would regard as the central portion of his life work, Buber responded that the one basic insight that led him to the study of the Bible and of Hasidism, as well as to his independent philosophy, was

that the I-Thou relation to God and the I-Thou relation to one's fellow man are at bottom related to each other. . . . All my work on the Bible has ultimately served this insight.⁸

Since there is no "Thou" in English, except as it is found in the Bible or

8. Sydney and Beatrice Rome, eds. *Philosophical Interrogations* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1970), "Interrogation of Martin Buber," conducted by Maurice Friedman, with Buber's replies trans. by Maurice Friedman, p. 99f.

among "plain-speaking" Quakers, it is natural that many regard the I-Thou as something rarefied and fall into the way of thinking which led the Old Testament scholar, C.H. Dodd, to say that most people imagine that everything in the Bible happened on Sunday!

On the other hand, there are two considerations that weigh heavily against Kaufmann's translation of *Du* as "You." The first is that by 1970 there was an already-established usage of thirty-three years and a whole literature in which the "I-Thou" is employed. The second is that in English "you" is all too often impersonal and means not much other than "one," thus missing entirely the directness, mutuality, openness, and presentness that Buber wished to convey by using the distinction which does exist in German (as in Spanish and French) between the *Du* and the *Sie*, the "Thou" and the "You."

In a response to the French Catholic existentialist philosopher, Gabriel Marcel, in the "Replies to My Critics" section of *The Philosophy of Martin Buber*, Buber conceded that his use in *I and Thou* of the statement "In the beginning was relation" now seemed to him too ambiguous because of its many overtones. In similar fashion, Buber once said to me that were he to write *I and Thou* again, he would feel compelled to find terminology that would sharpen the distinction between the I-Thou relationship with one's fellowman and that with nature. But the Buber of thirty-five years later did not feel himself empowered to go back and change *I and Thou* to fit his present insight:

At that time I wrote what I wrote in an overpowering inspiration. And what such inspiration delivers to one, one may no longer change, not even for the sake of exactness. For one can only measure what one might acquire, not what is lost.⁹

In his assessment of Buber's triumphs and failure Kaufmann totally ignores this thirty-five year gap and suggests that Buber's unwillingness to revise *I and Thou* was because, unlike Kaufmann's own hero Nietzsche, Buber had only one inspiration. This is to misunderstand the faithfulness with which Buber stood in relationship to dialogic truth, a faithfulness best expressed in the line that Buber himself so often quoted from Nietzsche: "One receives, and one does not know who gives." The form and content of a real philosophical text cannot be separated for the sake of an analytical consistency that loses sight of the fact that existential thinking takes place really in a specific time and in a specific situation and not abstracted from them!

Kaufmann links this criticism with a broadside attack on the style of *I and Thou* as "affected rather than ruthlessly honest," as "a pose without any redeeming wit or irony," approximating "the oracular tone of false prophets," and as an unsuccessful imitation of Nietzsche's *Zarathustra*

9. Buber, "Replies to My Critics," trans. by Maurice Friedman, in *The Philosophy of Martin Buber*, p. 706.

(which Kaufmann himself admits Nietzsche did not revise). All of these alleged defects Kaufmann attributes to the *Zeitgeist*: "Such scrupulous weighing of every word was not in fashion in 1923 when *I and Thou* first appeared." Ironically, Buber criticized Nietzsche's *Zarathustra* (which had seduced him in his youth but from which he had, in due course, liberated himself) for exactly what Kaufmann criticizes Buber — the illicit attempt to imitate the style of the prophets! More important, Kaufmann's criticisms of Buber's style, like his accusations of inauthenticity, are nothing but unsupported and unillustrated assertion. Still more serious, they are totally misleading in the impression they give that *I and Thou* was not revised by Buber at the time that he wrote it. "Buber refused to go over his text critically, feeling, if only dimly, that genuine self-criticism might have required him to abandon the central idea." On the contrary, Buber went over it critically many times before publishing it, and he even subjected it, before publication, to the close scrutiny and perceptive criticism of his great friend, Franz Rosenzweig, as Kaufmann himself points out.

Kaufmann to the contrary notwithstanding, *I and Thou* is not a book of the "easy word" but of the "hard word," as I have shown in the chapter "The World of Words" in *Martin Buber's Life and Work: The Early Years — 1878-1923*.¹⁰ Hugo von Hofmannsthal and the Viennese culture seduced the early Buber to the easy word, as did Nietzsche's *Zarathustra*. Buber's spiritual lifeway led him to an evermore intense struggling for seriousness and concreteness and in consequence impelled him to ever sharper renunciation of all that was playfully romantic, of all mere mood and beauty, of every word that was not spoken with the full earnest of responsibility. This renunciation was always also a renunciation of a danger in his own being, of a temptation in his own soul, toward which many natural inclinations drew him. Buber himself saw 1916, the time of his first sketch of *I and Thou*, as the time of decisive change from the "easy word" to the hard one, for he left instructions in his will that nothing of the many things that he had written before 1916 be published if it were not already in print. In conversation with Werner Kraft, Buber said that he had written much in the first period of his life, but that he had become aware of the right way of writing only in the second.¹¹ In the first epoch of his writing, as Buber himself described it, Hofmannsthal's nonchalance of the heir who squandered the treasure of antiquity enchanted his heart and permeated his writing. The beginning of the second epoch Buber saw as occurring during, and because of, the First World War:

Two decades passed before, in the storm of the World War, which made manifest the innermost threat to man, I struggled through to the strict

10. New York: E.P. Dutton, 1981.

11. Werner Kraft, *Gespräche mit Martin Buber* (Munich: Jakob Hegner Verlag, 1966), p. 181.

service of the word and earned the heritage with as much difficulty as if I had never supposed that I possessed it.¹²

Buber's mystical-existentialist dialogues entitled *Daniel* (1913) had "spirituality" but lacked "spirit" in the exact sense in which Buber later used the term — as a reality of the "between." *Daniel* was still too much a book of the complex mind and the beautiful word, and its author was a "spiritual" man rather than a simple one. *I and Thou* lacks nothing of either the poetic quality or the beauty of *Daniel*. Yet these are now mastered by an all-encompassing purpose as they were not in *Daniel*. The poetic element, as Grete Schaeder, the editor of the three-volume *Buber Briefwechsel* puts it, plays at once a crowning and serving role in Buber's writings because in these writings the whole man comes into play, and the reader is addressed in his power of feeling as well as his thought.

The speech of poetry remains indispensable to him, (writes Schaeder) But he does not allow his world to be flooded by intoxication; his head remains clear and does not confuse religious dedication with aesthetic devotional intoxication. He holds himself open for the whole answer.¹³

The road from the "easy word" to the hard one was for Buber a road from "speaking beautifully" to rejecting any expression not fully mastered by intention and devotion to the word.

What was that central dichotomy of *I and Thou* which Kaufmann feels Buber would have had to abandon had he gone over the book critically? Nothing other than the distinction between the "I-Thou" relationship of openness, mutuality, directness, and presentness, and the "I-It" relation of subject and object, knowledge and use, pastness, and categories. This dichotomy is meant only in Dilthey's sense of ideal types and never as Simon-pure reality, yet Kaufmann distorts and attacks it as a Manichean, Gnostic dualism between good and evil — the brief ecstatic moments of the Thou and the rest of the time in which inhumanly we look at the beloved of a moment before as an impersonal object to be observed and analyzed. Although Buber does speak once in *I and Thou* of moments of Thou, or You, that "appear as queer lyric-dramatic episodes," pulling us dangerously to extremes, loosening the well-tried structure, leaving behind more doubt than satisfaction, shaking up our insecurity — altogether uncanny, altogether indispensable, this Dionysian note is rare in *I and Thou*, and it does not recur. Buber did not mean, as Kaufmann assumes, that when I think about a person nothing of the Thou remains — only that in so far as the beloved is talked about I must put her or him into categories, such as height, color of hair, and sex. These very details, so far

12. Martin Buber, *A Believing Humanism: Gleanings*, trans. with an Introduction and Explanatory Comments by Maurice Friedman (New York: Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, 1969), p. 30.

13. Grete Schaeder, *Martin Buber: Hebräischer Humanismus* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1966), pp. 29, 73, my translation. Schaeder's book has been published in English translation (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1973).

from being an obstacle to the Thou, are taken up in their particularity and concreteness when I turn back to my friend or beloved as a person. Indeed, the example that Kaufmann uses to disprove Buber — his own experience as a photographer — illustrates Buber's true meaning. The portrait or photograph falls into the realm of the "describable, analysable, classifiable" only when we look at it as an object, perhaps noting the painter's use of colors or the photographer's use of figure and ground. The true seeing of that painting or photograph lifts it from the It to the Thou, and all the details that we have noticed about it can enter into our I-Thou relationship with the picture. The It is no Manichean obstacle to the Thou for Buber, as it is for Ferdinand Ebner; it is its footstool and its throne. The whole of *I and Thou* is concerned with bringing ever-greater realms of the It into the world of the Thou. Nor is there, as Kaufmann further implies, any split between the finite Thou of our relationship to nature, art, and our fellowman and the "eternal Thou" of our relationship to God. One cannot separate Buber's understanding of the I-Thou relationship with God from his understanding of man's relationship to the world.

There is a Manichean strain in *I and Thou* that is unworthy of Buber, (writes Kaufmann) and he himself might have eliminated it if he had been more severe with the child of his inspiration. . . . In line with his Manichean denigration of the I-It and unduly romantic and ecstatic notion of the I-Thou, he refused [subject his brainchild] to rigorous criticism, (mistaking) intense emotion for revelation and did not realise how much rational reflection is needed if we really want to encounter the You rather than an illusion.

If Kaufmann had read with more real understanding the book that he translated, he could never have made a statement so utterly wide of the mark. It is precisely the attack on Manichean dualism that lies at the heart of *I and Thou* as of all Buber's mature writings. When presence (*Gegenwart*) is changed, as it must be, into object (*Gegenstand*), then present becomes past. Every finite Thou to which we stand in relationship always becomes again an It, and is included in the connection of the experienceable world. Therefore, a continuum of a Thou-world is impossible. There is, however, a hidden Thou-world that can be lifted out, based upon the relationship to the "eternal Thou which by its nature cannot become an It." This eternal Thou establishes a living connection between the isolated Thou relationships so that they do not remain detached atoms but form parts of a living whole. Every real relationship into which we enter is suited to further, to help the decisive relationship, if we let it stream into it. This is the true continuity which cannot be *deduced* from the eternal Thou but can become, "a shining, streaming constancy." Every It can be uplifted to Thou so that the eternal Thou can radiate in all relationships into all life. "The Shekhinah is between the beings."

When I pointed out to Kaufmann, after his lecture in Israel, that Buber saw his life-work precisely as the attack on the Manicheanism

prevalent in our time, he responded, "I wanted to say that there must be something wrong with a man like that." This non-sequitur hinted at a personal background without which we might well be totally baffled by such a gross misunderstanding of the heart of *I and Thou* by its official translator.

In November, 1958, Kaufmann sent Buber a long letter in which he expressed his disappointment at Buber's April 1958 letter in response to Kaufmann's *Critique of Religion and Philosophy*.

With much of it I assent, (wrote the octogenarian), and with much of it I disagree. Though I am deeply affected by its candour and directness, I simply lack the time to write letters about books.

To Kaufmann this seemed more like the old Goethe than the old Buber. Kaufmann regarded his book as summing up all of his past life, and, moreover, as a question addressed to Buber. Asserting that a letter could be a more meaningful dialogue between two persons than a face-to-face seminar of twenty men and women, Kaufmann asked, "How many persons are there in my generation whom a few words from you about what they are trying to do and doing could help so much as me?" Buber's response seemed particularly paradoxical to Kaufmann since Buber's writing dealt with the lack of, and need for, genuine dialogue!

When I ask you questions "on the knees of my heart" and you reply that you lack time to answer, how can I see it as anything else than a rejection?¹⁴

In these last years I have been forced to give up writing real letters (not only about books), [Buber replied]. They no longer have for me the character of "contemporaneity," the living reciprocity that they had earlier. I need the "back and forth," the "on the spot," the unique meeting of each other, of speaking and listening.

Since he did not know when they could next talk and since he was deeply touched by Kaufmann's reproach, Buber asked him to say which passages in his book he most wanted an opinion on and he would reply as best he could.¹⁵ This did not satisfy Kaufmann. Kaufmann's heightened ambivalence toward Buber from then on stems from this disappointment.

One more thing needs to be said concerning the distortions arising from Walter Kaufmann's mismeeting with Martin Buber. By naming *I and Thou* as the cornerstone of Buber's philosophy and then attacking it, Kaufmann wishes to dismiss the significance of Buber's philosophy of dialogue as a whole, reserving his praise for Buber's translation of the Bible and his telling of Hasidic tales. But a true assessment of the significance of Buber's philosophy is not possible unless *I and Thou* is taken together with all the books that in one way or another stem from it: *Between Man and Man*, *Good and Evil*, *Eclipse of God*, *The Knowledge of Man*,

14. Martin Buber: *Briefwechsel aus sieben Jahrzehnten*, Vol. III 1938-1965, #405. Walter Kaufmann to Martin Buber, Princeton, November 23, 1958, pp. 469-72, my translation.

15. Ibid., #406. Martin Buber to Walter Kaufmann, pp. 472 f., my translation.

and much of *Pointing the Way* and *A Believing Humanism: Gleanings*. This whole series represents Buber's developing philosophical anthropology, his understanding of the totality and uniqueness of the human, as it also represents Buber's application of his philosophy of dialogue to the theory of knowledge, psychology, education, ethics, aesthetics, social philosophy, and the philosophy of religion.

If we must characterize Buber at all, we can best call him a philosophical anthropologist. In so doing we do not limit the significance of Buber's philosophy to the human, but we recognize that man's access to being, according to Buber, is not through Plato's ideal forms or Heidegger's being that shines forth in the existent, but through "the between" — the dialogue between man and the existent facing him. Buber's philosophy of dialogue is not merely a phenomenological description of man's twofold attitude — I-Thou and I-It — but also an "ontology" which points to the "between" as the really real ("All real living is meeting").

In the last and decisive stage of his anthropology, Buber found it necessary to deepen this ontological base by discovering the two basic movements of man from which this twofold principle of human life is derived. The first of these Buber called "the primal setting at a distance," the second "entering into relation" (*The Knowledge of Man*, "Distance and Relation"). The first movement is the presupposition for the second, for we can enter into relation only with a being that has been set at a distance from us and thereby has become an independent opposite. In human life together, it is the fact that man sets man at a distance and makes him independent that enables him to enter into relation, as an individual self, with those like himself. Through this "interhuman" relation men confirm each other, becoming selves with one another. The inmost growth of the self is not induced by man's relation to himself, as people suppose today, but by the confirmation in which one man knows himself to be "made present" in his uniqueness by the other. Making the other present means "to imagine the real," to imagine quite concretely what another person is wishing, feeling, perceiving, and thinking. This is no empathy or intuitive perception, but a bold swinging into the other which demands the most intense action of one's being.

Buber's teaching of confirmation is of the greatest importance for his philosophy of dialogue in general and for its application to family life, education, and psychotherapy in particular, yet it is only in *Between Man and Man* and *The Knowledge of Man*, not in *I and Thou*, that it is developed. *The Knowledge of Man* stands, indeed, as the culmination and crown of Buber's theory of knowledge, his philosophical anthropology, and ontology. Again Kaufmann is totally wide of the mark when he claims that Buber has no epistemology, a subject to which I have devoted a whole chapter in *Martin Buber: The Life of Dialogue*. An especially significant development of Buber's thought in *The Knowledge of Man* is his long essay on "Guilt and Guilt Feelings," which is an important extension of his

philosophical anthropology, a base for his ethics, a commentary on the culture of our times, and an application of his thought to psychotherapy. The centrality of man's existence as We is basic to Buber's distinction in this essay between "groundless" neurotic guilt — a subjective feeling within a person, usually unconscious and repressed — and "existential" guilt — an ontic, interhuman reality in which the person dwells in the truest sense of the term.

The Knowledge of Man also includes "Man and His Image-Work," Buber's anthropology of art — the culmination of a long lifetime of active and informed interest in art, including discussions of art dispersed throughout sixty years of writing. "Man and His Image-Work" also represents a significant development in Buber's theory of knowledge, which points to the I-Thou relationship as an entirely other way of knowing, yet one from which the I-It, or subject-object, relation is derived. Our relation to nature is founded on numberless connections between movements to something and perceptions of something, says Buber. Even the images of fantasy draw their material from this foundation. That to which we move and which we perceive is always sensible. The sense world itself arises out of the intercourse of being and being. Taken together, "Distance and Relation" and "Man and His Image-Work," are the most explicit and sustained treatment of epistemology in Buber's writings.¹⁶

What Buber says in "Man and His Image-Work" of the ontological significance of all philosophical anthropology is especially true of his own:

Every anthropology of a subject touches on its ontology, hence every investigation of a subject in its condition by the manner, the nature, the attitude of man leads us toward this subject's place in being and its function in meaning. Thus to the degree that we fathom the relation to a circle of reality to us, we are always referred to its still unfathomed relation to being and meaning.¹⁷

With a profundity unequalled in our time, Martin Buber's philosophical anthropology refers us to man's still unfathomed relation to being and meaning. Along with his misunderstanding of the dialectic between I-Thou and I-It, Walter Kaufmann's most serious mismeeting with Martin Buber is his failure to bring Buber's philosophical anthropology into his assessment of Buber as a philosopher.

16. Martin Buber, *The Knowledge of Man*, ed. with an Introductory Essay (Chap. 1) by Maurice Friedman (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1965; New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1966), Maurice Friedman, "Introductory Essay," pp. 11, 13, 20 f., 38 f., 47 f.

17. *The Knowledge of Man*, "Man and His Image-Work," trans. by Maurice Friedman, p. 149f.

I Had Been A Rachel

SHELLEY KAPLAN

I had been a Rachel before you
And I had stood and looked you
Squarely in the eye.

But you looked back
With eyes that burned
With promises you would not keep.
No longer can I look into that flame.

Oh, my eyes, my eyes
That closed at your sweet kiss.
On the darkest of nights
You taught me to close my eyes.

You knit me a veil.
Stitch upon stitch
The tight fine mesh engulfed me in its thickness.
Darkness hung her robe around me.
I sought you out but only saw
The shadows hugging across the walls.
My eyes grew weak with strain from looking.

This morning I looked for you.
I could not see.
I lifted the veil
And discovered to my sorrow
I have become Leah.

SHELLEY KAPLAN *teaches Hebrew in Chicago.*

Stefan Zweig and Judaism – A Letter and an Interview

ALFRED WOLF

THE ONE HUNDREDTH ANNIVERSARY OF Stefan Zweig's birth sent me back to yellowed papers of my undergraduate days. In 1937, I wrote a senior thesis at the University of Cincinnati on "Jewish Elements in the Works of Stefan Zweig." This was, then, a timely topic. Zweig was one of the most widely read authors. His biographies — *Master Builders*, *Mental Healers*, *Marie Antoinette*, *Mary Queen of Scots*, *Erasmus of Rotterdam* — were best sellers both in the original German and when translated into numerous languages. His short stories and his one major novel, *Beware of Pity*, were equally popular. All revealed a deep concern for human beings — particularly for sensitive souls lost in an insensitive world, for seekers of justice and freedom frustrated by ruthless power.

Zweig was one of the many creative intellects to spring from Vienna's Jewish families. Herzl and Buber were among his friends but he played no active part in Jewish life. He produced a few short stories on Jewish themes. In his drama, *Jeremiah*, he chose the story of the biblical Prophet as a powerful vehicle for his pacifism and for his conviction that a people's spirit cannot be overcome by military might. But he said nothing about his own Jewish commitment. After reading practically everything Zweig had published, I still felt that my conclusions were not more than educated guesses and, therefore, I wrote to him. "A few lines from your hand," my letter stated, "would show the right way and would help to turn an uncertain hypothesis into a valuable achievement."

To my delight, Stefan Zweig responded with a cordial letter in which he analyzed, at some length, his relationship to his Jewish heritage. None of his works that I read, including his autobiography, deal with this subject as concisely or as thoroughly as this letter:

Naples, February 4, 1937

Dear Mr. Wolf,

Your letter reached me on a trip through Italy; hence the delay and the somewhat lame thanks for your friendly interest. The most important information I can give you on your subject is that especially the most recent collection of my short stories, *Kaleidoskop* published by Herbert Reichner, contains two previously unavailable works in book form which, to me, are

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the most essential since *Jeremiah*. (His one major drama, published 1917. Ed.) They are a short legend, previously published, *Rahel Rechtet Mit Gott* ("Rachel Contends with God") and an entirely new major work, in fact a book in itself, *Der Begrabene Leuchter* ("The Buried Candelabrum"). This is a long legend based on the fate of the seven-branched candelabrum which moved from Jerusalem to Babylon, returned from there, was taken to Rome by Titus, was pillaged by the Vandals to Carthage, seized from Carthage by Belisar and carried to Byzantium — perhaps the most remarkable journey across the earth ever endured by a religious work of art. I interpret it, therefore, as a symbol of all Jewish wandering. According to the saga, Justinian returned the candelabrum to Jerusalem; to a Christian church, to be sure. There, it disappeared. In my legend, instead of disappearing, the candelabrum goes into hiding awaiting the possibility of a resurrection. This work is extremely important to me. For your subject it is indispensable. I hope that you can secure the volume from a library in New York. At any rate, I shall have a copy sent to you when I return to London. (The copy arrived a short time later. Ed.) Forgive me for expanding on this; however, a total image would be faulty without consideration of this, perhaps my most relevant work.

Now let me attempt a few frank statements on my personal attitude toward Judaism. Because of the great literary and also human trust extended to me by Herzl, in my early youth, it was incumbent on me to draw near to his life's dominant idea. In those days, I knew the youthful forces of Zionism, Martin Buber, (the artist) Lilien (to whose work I wrote an introduction) and many others. But it is one of my essential traits — whether an advantage or a defect — that I lack all fanaticism, that I abjure all onesidedness and singlemindedness. Therefore Zionism and Palestine never appeared to me as the solution, but rather as one of the most fortunate and reinforcing ideologies within Judaism contributing tremendously toward a renewal of idealism. But I do not wish Judaism to leave its universalism and supranationalism in order to encrust itself in its Hebrew and its Nationalist aspects. There always were two parties within Jewry. One saw salvation entirely in the Temple. The other said, at the siege of Jerusalem that, should this Temple be destroyed, the entire world would be our Temple.

I believe that the Jewish and the human elements must always remain identical and that any feeling of superiority and any forced segregation of Jewry (often but the sublimination of a feeling of inferiority) represents a major moral danger. I therefore never adopted a fixed program but endeavored to render service quietly and, wherever possible, in the background. In my work — as you may see in my *Jeremiah*, etc. — I never denied my convictions, nor did I over-emphasize them. I do not believe that we need to create a "Jewish", a national literature, but only to write as we are moved to write. And since we are Jews and do not deny it, this work of itself will assume a Jewish character. Anything forced and consciously accentuated, however, is superfluous.

Again, dear Mr. Wolf, accept my gratitude. I hope that I did not write either too vainly or too obscurely.

With fondest greetings, your

(signed) Stefan Zweig

My second encounter with Stefan Zweig, this one face to face, occurred in January 1939. I had corresponded with him in 1938, securing his permission for a performance of his *Jeremiah* at the Hebrew Union Col-

lege in Cincinnati. When he stopped in Cincinnati during an American lecture tour, he invited me for dinner and I, in turn, prevailed on him to come to the College for a chat with the students.

A letter I wrote to my fiancée that same evening preserves my impressions. "I spent the whole evening with Stefan Zweig. It was one of the grandest experiences I ever had." I was awed at the moment of introduction but "after a few seconds in his company, I felt as though he had been my friend for a long time." He was traveling with Charlotte Altmann, his secretary, whom he was to marry that year and who joined him in death, a few years later, in Brazil. The free-spirited Lotte, incidentally, was the great-granddaughter of Samson Raphael Hirsch, Germany's most famous champion of strict Jewish orthodoxy.

We talked about family members who were still in Hitler's Germany. He held the opinion that old people should stay in Germany regardless of what might happen to them. They would not be happy anywhere else.

Before the rabbinic students, he advocated personal efforts to rescue Jews from Germany but warned against attempts at mass ransom. It would be better, he thought, that a few hundred thousand Jews perish than that, by paying ransom, Jews encourage other countries to follow Hitler's example.

In retrospect, such thinking appears naive; but this was 1939 and none of us could conceive what must have been, even then, Hitler's plan. A year later — still long before Hitler's "Final Solution" became public knowledge — Zweig was to write "Europe is still a good place to die in but not for living" and "even my pessimism has been surpassed by actual events."¹

Zweig's pacifism puzzled the students even more than his pessimism. He was keenly aware that as a celebrated writer he was a public figure whose opinion could sway a considerable audience. Still, he maintained that, on the one hand it would be irresponsible to propagandize pacifism and disarmament in democratic countries while the fascist dictators were preparing for war. On the other, it would be wrong to call for war on the fascists. Therefore, silence must be the correct policy — as it was in 1914.

On this point, Zweig's attitude remained constant. As late as 1941 he wrote: "I will not say a word that could be interpreted as urging America's entry into the war."²

On that January evening, in 1939, at the Hebrew Union College, pressed by questions from passionate, concerned young rabbinic students, Zweig gave expression to his essentially passive view of Jewish identity. He had dramatized it in *Jeremiah* in 1917, reaffirmed it in his summary statement to me in 1937.

We had no opportunity to record him verbatim, but he said, in effect,

1. *Stefan and Friderike Zweig — Their Correspondence 1912-1942* (New York: Hastings House, 1954), pp. 315 and 313.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 327.

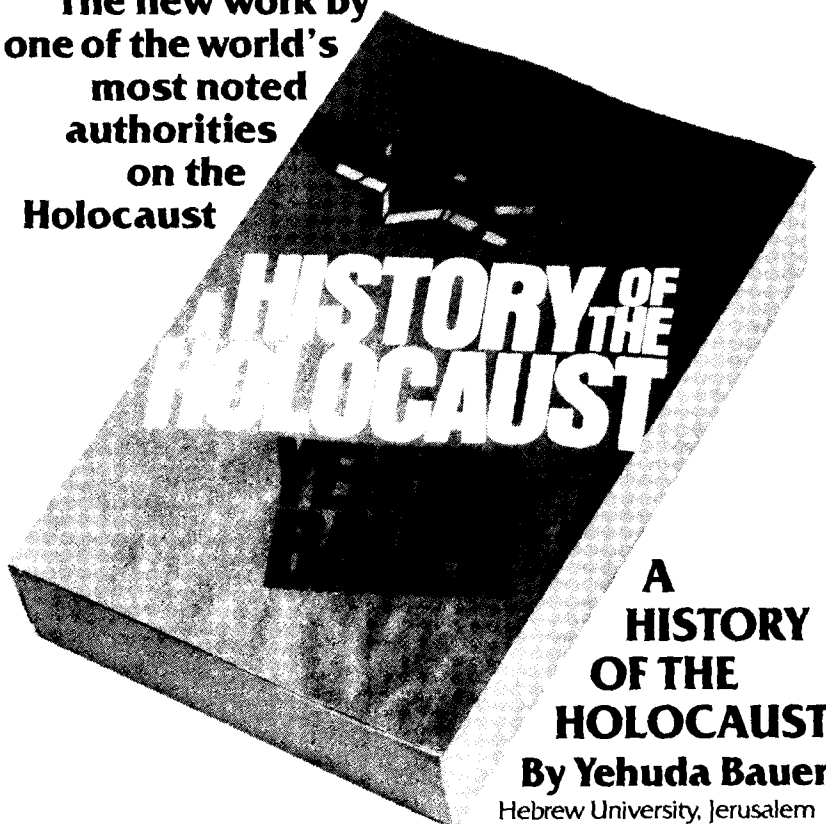
that he did not want the Jews to cry out under their afflictions, but to let others do the lamenting while they turn inward to draw strength from their spiritual resources. The Jew, he believed, is always the victim suffering for the world. At that world-moment only a miracle could save him and we had no right to expect a miracle to occur again as it had so often in the past.

I asked him whether he had any intention of setting down his view of Jewish history more explicitly than in *Jeremiah* and in *The Buried Candelabrum*. He replied that he had gathered notes for such a book and hoped to write it at a later date.

We shall never read that book. Depressed and discouraged by world events, cut off from the cultural roots that nourished him, Zweig committed suicide, together with his wife, in Petropolis, Brazil, November 22, 1942. Ironically, his inner strength gave out in that peaceful retreat, thousand of miles from the storm which put the spiritual and physical resources of millions of victims to the ultimate test. He was a pessimist. He wrote about miracles — in *Jeremiah*, in *The Buried Candelabrum*, in *Sternstunden der Menschheit* — but he did not believe in miracles.

Despite his learned genius, Stefan Zweig failed to grasp one of the elemental lessons of the Jewish experience, stated with simple eloquence by a man who stood in the eye of the hurricane and survived — Simon Wiesenthal: “A Jew who does not believe in miracles is not a realist.”

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Contents: Preface; Who Are the Jews?; Liberalism, Emancipation, and Antisemitism; World War I, and its Aftermath; The Weimar Republic; The Evolution of Nazi Jewish Policy, 1933–1938; German Jewry in the Prewar Era, 1933–1938; Poland—The Siege Begins; Life in the Ghettos; The "Final Solution"; West European Jewry 1940–1944; Resistance; Rescue; The Last Years of the Holocaust, 1943–1945; Aftermath and Revival; Bibliography; Index.



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An Irrational* Society Revisited: The Viennese Rejection of Liberalism and the Jews

Review-Essay by HERBERT A. YOSKOWITZ

Fin-De-Siècle Vienna. By CARL SCHORSKE. New York. Knopf, 1980. 378 pp., \$15.95.

RECENTLY, *COMMENTARY* MAGAZINE (69, January 1980) printed the results of a symposium on the subject of "Liberalism and the Jews." A number of American Jews of varying political views had been asked if they ought to take for granted that their own interest coincided with, and could best be represented through, the standard liberal agenda. Many answers were offered, some of which are antithetical to each other. For example, Attorney Morris B. Abram writes:

Liberals and Jews especially were sensitive to the needs of those not equipped for the race or who, for whatever reason, faltered. Those in need were to be helped, preferably by equipping them or re-equipping them to compete, if not immediately, ultimately. Honest men, of course, had to acknowledge that the family and even good luck advantaged some and impeded others. But wise men understood that absolute evenness cannot be achieved, certainly not by government, and that an even start in a race would not guarantee an even finish. Equality before the law, neutrality as to ethnicity, religion, or sex, were the proper goals of the advocates of equal opportunity.

This staunch supporter of liberalism defends it for its own sake, and feels that the values inherent in the structure of Judaism coincide with some of the thrusts made by the doctrine of liberalism. In contrast, Leon Wieseltier, a member of the Society of Fellows at Harvard, argues:

The Jewish alliance with liberalism is owed not to the prophets, or to some immense national talent for morality, but to a tough minded perception of the Jewish self-interest: nineteenth century Jews in Western Europe determined that equal rights and civil rights were what they needed most, and so they hewed to the liberal vision of the middle classes. The decision about the future of this inherited relationship with liberalism must also be made in the name of Jewish interest.

Thus, we see that the question concerning both the Jews, liberalism,

* In this essay, a tide of irrationalism will be examined. The anti-rational movements and the non-rational forces, such as nationalism and romanticism, which accompanied this tide of irrationalism, are not directly involved with the thesis of this essay, which proposes to examine an irrational society and to see how that society affected liberalism and the Jews.

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and the relationship of one to the other is in dispute. An aid to the resolution of this dispute is the recently published *Fin-De-Siècle Vienna* by Carl Schorske.

This culmination of an eminent historian's two decades of fruitful activity is a volume worthy of celebration. It contains seven essays originally published between 1961 and 1980, with an introduction but with neither an epilogue nor a concluding statement. Evidently, the author assumed that the essays, once introduced, would speak for themselves. He is correct in his assumption. It is a major remarkable achievement that he was able to bring together material written at different periods without making the reader feel a lack of continuity.

Fin-De-Siècle Vienna deals with a crisis that overtook Hapsburg Vienna and no other city at the end of the nineteenth century. At that time, rational liberalism in politics and aestheticism in the arts gave way to introspective and anxious forms, the results of which are still with us.

With a fluctuating mixture of races and religions, Vienna first exploited anti-Semitism as a major political force. In addition to contributing Freud, Kokoschka, and Schoenberg to the Weimar Republic's formidable culture, Vienna's legacy can include, to a significant extent, the disturbed mind of Adolf Hitler, who attributed some of what he learned about Jews to Schönerer and Lueger, both of that city. Professor Schorske analyzes the relationship between Viennese culture and politics from 1860 to 1909, beginning with the urban plan for the Viennese Ringstrasse and ending with the performance of Kokoschka's first erotic-expressionist play.

A second main component of *Fin-De-Siècle Vienna* deals with the rejection of liberalism and the effects that such rejection had on the city and on individuals like Schönerer, Lueger, Herzl, Freud, Schnitzler and Schoenberg, all of whom began, and some of whom ended, their careers with a commitment to liberalism. The city had been governed by liberals who began to reshape the city with the Ringstrasse, in accord with their image of what Vienna ought to be. Both in ideas and in the arts, the liberals largely succeeded but, from the very beginning, they were attacked and, eventually, became the alienated and rejected group.

Schorske finds a pattern of alienation in Vienna, a rejection of the past which included liberal progressivism. In its stead, there was a more instinctual abstract symbolic view of man and a view of society that was beyond hope of consensus. He sees Freud's contributions stemming from the frustration which arose from not being allowed to rise politically. The erotic nudes of Gustav Klimt are understood as the painter's personal rebellion against the tradition of art promoted by the liberals. Zionism, espoused by Theodore Herzl, is a result (so the author claims) of the inability to see any hope for the integration of Jews in a non-Jewish society dominated by liberal thought and liberal politics. As a result of the failure

of great expectations, individual thinkers and artists galvanized their energies to create startling insights and experiments. In his introduction, Schorske calls this "the death of history," a death which resulted in modern architecture, modern music, modern philosophy, and modern science. Being independent of the past, defunct belief systems had to be replaced, and there was a consciousness of the need for "swift change in history-as-present."¹

In a related essay, published in *Daedalus*,² Schorske attributes some of the changes in cultural orientation to generational tension. The rejection of liberalism by the generation of the 1880s and 1890s was a concomitant of the rejection of the values of the parental generation. The liberals who had destroyed the remnants of medieval craft organizations in the name of economic freedom were not able to cope with the social suffering that attended rapid industrial developments. The economic crash of 1873 brought on new economic deprivations for which liberalism — both political and economic — was blamed. Scandals involving the political elite were disclosed. Failures in four major areas — national unity, social justice, economic prosperity, and public morality — converged in the 1870s and, by 1880, university youth, angry and frustrated at the comprehensiveness of liberalism's failure, sought new political and cultural premises to replace those of their fathers. Often, their politics became identical with those of the nationalistic Right wing parties. There were Jews amongst these young students who rebelled so that the challenge to liberalism raised by the *Commentary* symposium of 1980 is not a new one.

Four of the essays in *Fin-De-Siècle Vienna* emphasize the thoughts and actions of important figures: Schnitzler, Herzl, Freud, and Schoenberg. Each of these creative individuals had to ask what was his relationship to the rest of the society and in what sense was it — or was it not — "his society?" Schnitzler, Herzl and Freud remained Jews all of their lives, while Schoenberg, who was born Jewish, abandoned Jewish identity in his youth but formally re-converted in 1933. All of these men felt that, somehow, they were on the fringe of society, that they were outsiders. Schnitzler is described as "a despairing but committed liberal" (p. 14); Herzl wanted to avoid situations in which "the Democratic populace should turn against Liberalism" (p. 157); Freud possessed what is described as "clear and confident mid-century Liberalism" (p. 189); while Schoenberg emphasized the need for truth and not sole reliance upon comfort — "Beauty exists only from that moment when unproductive people begin to find it lacking . . . the artist has no need of it. For him. For him truthfulness is enough" (p. 358).

It is apparent that the basic thrusts and the definition of liberalism of the four Jewish liberals and of the non-Jewish liberals represented in

1. Introduction, p. xviii.

2. "Generational Tension and Cultural Change: Reflections on the Case of Vienna," *Daedalus* 107, (Fall 1978): 111-122.

Fin-De-Siècle Vienna were very much the same. The past and conservatism liberals discussed in *Fin-De-Siècle Vienna*. For example, Freud, who never take are good or bad for the Jews. Nevertheless, as Schorske's *Fin-De-Siècle* liberalism, is America's greatest strength. Schorske's *Fin-De-Siècle Vienna*

In relation to anti-Semitism, liberalism represents the rule of reason. Religious preferments and prejudices are rejected. At the same time, however, parochial loyalties and the preservation of a nation within a nation are suspect.

Schorske does not distinguish between Jewish and non-Jewish liberals and, in the main, he is correct. There was one difference, however, between even these universalist liberal Jews and non-Jewish liberals. The non-Jews were the ones to accentuate the scope and the limits of a separate Jewish community. Schorske misinterprets the reflections of Herzl and Freud as a desire to convert out of Judaism. That was not their wish at all. Rather, they hoped for a society in which all people would be free and would be treated with dignity. Any reference by Herzl, in particular, to a dream of converting out of Judaism is not to be taken literally, but is merely an aspect of the Messianic dream of having all people being "one" with no differentiation.

Those who were "consistent" liberals thought it reasonable to reduce the visibility of Jewish Corporate Institutions almost to the vanishing point, for the culmination of liberalism was, in a sense, a Messianic vision. There was also a practical aspect. The hate peddlers often used anti-Semitism as a means of attacking liberalism. Thus, when Herzl "saw the Jewish problem as peripheral to the social question" he was not being "a good assimilationist" as Schorske claims ((p. 157). Rather, he was taking a tack that would bring about a Messianic vision that apparently coincides in both liberalism and Judaism.

At times, there were disputes and even antagonisms among Jewish and non-Jewish liberals as they debated the implications of a free and open society. If the attempt was completely to obliterate the "ghettoization" of Jewry, shouldn't Jews be a part of the Democratic society and not have any voluntary separation from it? Indeed, this was an argument debated during the Napoleonic Era when questions raised whether Jews ought to be free and whether Judaism ought to be a viable alternative. Thus, people could make apparent anti-Semitic comments and still be regarded as friends of the Jews. Though Werner Sombart disavowed any fundamental hostility to Jews, he found them to be a "problem." Theodore Mommsen could state that "the great number of specifically Jewish societies which exist here in Berlin . . . appear to me to be definitely evil, insofar as they are not purely religious."³ Aside from the debate about the future of Judaism, the interests of Jews and liberals largely coincided and a case can be made that Jews can best be served by the liberal agenda.

3. For these and other examples, see Jacob Agus, *Jewish Identity In An Age Of Ideologies* (New York: Unger, 1978), chapter 5.

Examples abound of what happens when liberalism is overthrown. Schorske cites two in the essay discussing Georg von Schönerer and Karl Lueger. They are both examples of why Manes Sperber, a Viennese psychiatrist, called Vienna "the most anti-Semitic of all the great cities of the world."⁴

As the strength of liberal elements in Vienna receded, hatred of the Jew, both in the form of anti-Semitism and in the form of its more traditional Christian aspect, gave rise to considerable excesses. The German Nationalist Party harangued the Jews for this unjustified encroachment in public affairs, while the Christian Socialist Party fought their liberal "offences" against Catholics. The anti-Semites fought the alleged exploitation of the middle class, while the masses saw the Jew as an enemy. Lueger, who founded the Christian Socialist Party, and Schönerer, who preached a heated German Pan-Nationalism, had much in common.

Both men began as liberals, both criticized liberalism initially from a social and democratic viewpoint, and both ended as apostates, espousing explicitly anti-liberal creeds. Both used anti-Semitism to mobilize the same unstable elements in the population: artisans and students (p. 133).

Of the two, Lueger achieved the greater fame. He was elected Mayor of Vienna in 1895, an event regarded with disdain by the Austrian Emperor and all liberals. Here was a man who conveyed the most blatant anti-Semitism that was evident during that period. The Emperor refused to ratify his election, while the government, through the personal mediation of Franz Cardinal Schönborn, tried to secure papal intervention against Lueger and his movement. But all was in vain. Though the Emperor persisted in his refusals until 1897, mass politics forced him to capitulate, and the last bastion of liberalism fell.

There would be a distortion of history if our account of the negative forces were to stop with such extremists as Schönerer and Lueger. Schorske might have gone further to convey how even the very wealthy among the Jewish people were not accepted by non-liberal elements. To understand more of this rejection, a look at a recent study by Fritz Stern called *Gold and Iron* (New York: Vintage, 1979) will be helpful.

Gold and Iron details the relationship between Bismarck and his banker, Gerson Bleichröder, a Jew who rose to great public heights in the German Empire. Bismarck took an active interest in Bleichröder's management of his fortune and even warned the banker when political conditions seemed unfavorable. Of course, the Chancellor also advised his banker when to buy and sell bonds. Bleichröder could be referred to as Bismarck's "friend," though in the latter's many volumes of memoirs Bleichröder is mentioned only once.

Bleichröder was a very wealthy man who entertained lavishly, and his

4. Cited in Edmund Taylor, *The Fall of the Dynasties. The Collapse of the Old Order 1905-1922* (New York: Doubleday, 1963), p. 31.

guest list included most of high society and none of them were Jews. He attained nobility and always included *von* before his last name.

Bleichröder lived in the dignified world of Imperial Germany — amidst the splendor of nobility and the awesomeness of power. He also lived in the subterranean part of that world — a world whose existence the rulers of society scarcely acknowledged, but one in which their fortunes and their careers were nevertheless made and unmade (p. 226).

But he was a sad individual. His funeral is summarized thus:

Bleichröder was laid to rest with full honors but still needful of the State's protection. For services rendered, the Prussian Crown and the German Reich had amply rewarded him. Only the sense of safe acceptance had been withheld. And that perhaps is the essence of the anguish of assimilation (p. 541).

In the 1880s, even the protection of Bismarck seemed to disappear. At first, Bismarck was unwilling to utilize political anti-Semitism, since he had pioneered Jewish emancipation in Germany. Though he was personally associated with Bleichröder, whom he may have respected highly, yet, exigencies of domestic politics drove him into greater dependence upon such racists as Adolph Stocker. In the spring of 1881, he was persuaded that anti-Semitism was an indispensable weapon to win over lower middle class support so that the Bismarck who could act as a philo-Semite in pressuring Roumania to grant equality to Jews was the same Bismarck who could act as an anti-Semite even though he was not one.

Schorske's lack of references to Jewish history and Jewish Messianic hopes leads to an unfortunate grouping of Theodor Herzl with Georg Schönerer and Karl Lueger because he, like them, began as a liberal. He, too, observed the liberal failure and looked for an alternate means of survival. The Pan-Nationalists had turned their back on Austro-Liberalism; so had the Catholics; and, by the end of the century, even the Jews, for whom Austro-Liberalism meant "emancipation, opportunity, and assimilation to modernity, began to turn their backs on their benefactors" (p. 118). Nationalists threatened the Austrian State with disruption, and the Zionists threatened it with secession, argues Schorske, who groups these as "anti-liberal mass movements." He analyzes the many frayed ties of Herzl in an attempt to explain why he chose Zionism as an alternative to Austro-Liberalism, and refers to the loss of a good marriage and of friendship, among other items (p. 153). But, while Herzl abandoned the liberal hope insofar as Jews were concerned, he did not veer from his stance as a national liberal. Schorske misses this distinction. He should have paid attention not to the individual who led the movement of Zionism but to Zionism itself. While he is intent on showing the changes in individuals that resulted from a frustrated political situation, in the case of political Zionism there should have been a greater stress on the reason for the posture of Herzl and of some others who soon followed him.

For Jews, there was a realization that the only tenable stance for an

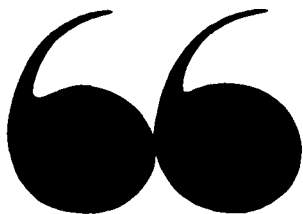
oppressed minority in an anti-Semitic land was to try afresh to formulate a reason for their continuity. Herzl was creative, and the frustration of a failed liberal society did impel him to be a founder of modern political Zionism. But what really motivated him was the desire to live in the Messianic Era — a desire which has impelled many Jewish people to act in innovative and creative ways. Oppression and frustration, Schorske states correctly, can lead to great creativity.

After all that has been written, why was Norman Podhoretz, the editor of *Commentary*, motivated to suspect Liberalism? It is this writer's conjecture that he is running a course dissimilar to that of the Jewish liberals discussed in *Fin-De-Siècle Vienna*. For example, Freud, who never abandoned the liberal hope, emphasized that reason does cure. His emphasis on the dark forces of the unconscious seems to reflect the despair of the liberals. A comparison, though, can be attempted between the position of Podhoretz and Herzl's rejection of a liberal hope for a larger society while accepting liberalism for the Jewish society about which he dreamed.

The emphases in *Commentary*, of late, have been the security of the United States and of Israel. Neo-conservatives, and not liberals, have been the most outspoken critics of the Soviet Union, a position supported by *Commentary*. Because liberal Christians both in Europe and in the United States have been the staunchest Western critics of Israel's treatment of Palestinians, some backers of Israel feel impelled to turn their backs on liberalism. Judging by the questions asked, the underlying concern in the *Commentary* symposium was not liberalism at all, even though responses such as those of Abram and Wieseltier show a diversity of views on it. Rather, the questions posed were a challenge to those who call themselves liberals without any delineation among the various groups who fall under that rubric. Thus, *Commentary's* symposium title, "Liberalism And The Jews" should have been "Some Liberals And The Jews."

There have always been people who call themselves "liberals" and who do not appear to have any concern whether the positions that they take are good or bad for the Jews. Nevertheless, as Schorske's *Fin-De-Siècle Vienna* illustrates so well, liberalism is the harbinger of the blessings which are the possession of the Jews and of others now, and which will eventually come to all people. Schorske, who is of Jewish origin, emphasizes the deep yearning for the success of liberalism that was felt by many Jews and non-Jews. It is an emphasis which Jews should always feel as a necessity. While *Commentary* correctly emphasizes that goodness requires muscle, it is important to recognize that America's idealism, as expressed in liberalism, is America's greatest strength. Schorske's *Fin-De-Siècle Vienna* makes us more aware that the implications of the direction in which *Commentary* would like us to move ought to be seriously weighed.

WORLDVIEW



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A Contemporary View of the Mediaevalists

Maimonides and Aquinas: A Contemporary Appraisal. By JACOB HABERMAN. Foreword by Professor Joseph L. Blau. New York. KTAV, 1979. xx + 289 pp.

Reviewed by LOUIS JACOBS

THIS VERY erudite book, written in a racy style by a remarkable polymath, consists, in the main, of a severe critique of the mediaeval attempts — represented by Maimonides in the Jewish camp and by Aquinas in the Christian — at reconciling faith with reason. There are a number of Appendices and copious notes, not all of them strictly germane to the central theme but valuable nonetheless, and an Epilogue, in which the author describes the views, which he shares, of Herbert Loewe's "Unorthodox Defense of Orthodoxy."

Dr. Haberman, armed with the weapons of modern linguistic analysis (hence the "Contemporary Appraisal" of the sub-title) and modestly scanning the philosophical horizon like a pygmy on the shoulders of a giant (his own metaphor, upon which expression he has an excellent historical and bibliographical note), has little difficulty in exposing the inadequacies of both Maimonides and Aquinas, indeed, of the whole mediaeval exercise, in trying to reconcile faith (= revelation) with reason (= Aristotleanism and Platonism). Both "giants," he demonstrates, rely on reason when it suits them but are all too ready to jettison reason when faith demands it, all of which results in a sophistry in which justice is done to neither. Far better to see faith and reason as

independent of one another than attempt to achieve a synthesis doomed to failure in its artificiality. Haberman, good at pungent illustration, might have referred to Shaw's retort to the actress who proposed marriage to him because the child born to them would have his brains and her beauty: "But what if it has your brains and my beauty!"

On the whole, Haberman's argument is cogent, though not as entirely original as he seems to imagine. It is surely a commonplace that many of the probings of the mediaeval mind fail to register with moderns. We undoubtedly have our perplexities but they are not those for which Maimonides wrote his Guide. Even though this does not affect his basic thesis, Haberman can also be challenged for some of his more sweeping generalisations, as when he quotes Luria, the famous Kabbalist, opposing the daily recital of *yigdal* and *ani maamin*, implying that Luria was opposed to dogma in Judaism. Luria's opposition was, in fact, due to his conviction that these catechisms were not composed by inspired authors and, consequently, were not in accord with the Kabbalistic mysteries in which Luria believed as "dogmatically" as did Maimonides in his Thirteen Principles. Similarly, Haberman gives Maimonides a gentle pat on the head for anticipating the statement in the Ras Shamra texts which enjoins the seething of a kid in its mother's milk as an idolatrous rite and so explains the Torah's opposition to the practice. Actually, Maimonides does not speak of seething a kid in its mother's milk but, as the Rabbis understand the verse and as he believed categorically, of boiling any meat and milk together. Moreover, Ugaritic ex-

perts now inform us that it is far from certain that the relevant Ras Shamra tablet can be made to read in this way.

The most intriguing sections of Haberman's book are those in which he faces squarely the problem of intellectual integrity for observant Jews of today, i.e., in which he tries to convey his own personal *credo*. As the jacket blurb describes his qualifications, the author has *semikhah* from the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary of Yeshiva University, has a doctorate from Columbia and a J.D. degree from New York Law School and is now active in the real estate and construction business. He is, then, the kind of loyal Jew who has lived, and is now living, in the two worlds and who has struggled through to faith so that what he has to say is of great interest. Like his hero, Herbert Loewe, Haberman is Orthodox in an un-Orthodox way. He is no fundamentalist and somewhat tentatively remarks that "the conclusions and results of biblical scholarship must be respected," going on to say that even if we find in the Pentateuch "traces of what can be interpreted as either documents or traditions emanating from different circles" we can still maintain "faith in it as the special and unrivalled source and norm of truth," quoting in support Rosenzweig's well-known letter to Jacob Rosenheim in which the symbol "R" is made to stand not for "Redactor" but "Rabbenu." But he rejects Rosenzweig's idea of the special role of Christianity in the divine scheme. On this topic, as well as on the general meaning of revelation, it is Loewe who is, for him, the far better guide.

Where Haberman is weak here is in his failure to realise that, once the critical view is adopted, it will not do simply to argue that the traditional doctrine of revelation is still intact, God revealing His will at

different times through a number of "circles" and eventually through "R." The critical view implies that the human element in revelation is always present so that the Torah is not only God conveying a message to man but also of man reaching out for God, at times confusedly and in error. To be sure, one can still hold that total commitment to the *mizvot* is demanded but the mood will have been created in which the dynamism of the Halakhah will have to be acknowledged. In brief, if labels are to be assigned, the logical conclusion would appear to be that of Conservative Judaism. Now, *contra* Mordecai Kaplan, Haberman strongly denies that Loewe really belonged to the Conservative school in Judaism on the grounds that he always described himself as Orthodox (yes, but in a very special "English" sense). Loewe refused to countenance riding to the synagogue on the Sabbath and once stated that we must ask ourselves not, What is the result of *Sha'atnez*, but, What is the result achieved by living the Jewish life "*be'hol peratehah uve'hol dikedukehah*," (in every detail). Actually, Loewe is as inconsistent here as Haberman holds Maimonides to be. In the Introduction to the work which he co-edited with C.G. Montefiore: *A Rabbinic Anthology*, Loewe, admitting that the difference between Reform and Orthodoxy is now (i.e., once criticism is allowed its head) only one of degree, writes (p. lxxx):

Now it simply will not do to say that the difference between the Orthodox and the Liberals is that the former do, and the latter do not, obey the rulings of the *Shulhan Aruk*. This is commonly said, but it is inexact. What we mean is that the Liberals keep less of that code than do the Orthodox. I have yet to find a Jew who observes every detail of the *Shulhan Aruk*: I think that there is one in my Congregation; he is a man of great wealth and is able to live his

own life, practically in isolation from the outer world. How many Rabbis of so-called Orthodox Congregations refuse to wear garments made of linsey-woolsey? And *Sha'atnez* is a biblical and not even a Rabbinic prohibition! Here, again, as in the case of biblical criticism, a principle is at stake. The test of the *Shulhan 'Aruk* must be applied with accuracy and thoroughness. Once we consider ourselves at liberty to pick and choose, our definition fails; our actions are dictated not by principle but by subjective choice. Instead of differences of principle or of kind, we are confronted by differences of degree.

Haberman says of Loewe that he eschewed party labels but, in point of fact, "in the United States, I sup-

pose, his position would be described as modern Orthodox." I doubt it very much. It is news to me that the "modern Orthodox" in the U.S.A. are in any way willing to consider that there might be some truth in biblical (especially in Pentateuchal) criticism, but I may be wrong. In any event, what is involved is far more than the attitudes of Loewe or his disciple. Involved is the tremendous idea that the quest for Torah is itself Torah and to say no more of Haberman's book than this will assist in the quest.

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